



BARNSTON 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

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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 the village of Barnston.

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 areas 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 Barnston is located towards the centre of the Wirral Peninsula between the large settlements of Birkenhead and Heswall. It is within a largely undeveloped, agricultural band of land which runs from the outskirts of Birkenhead to the north-west of Chester.

1.2 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

- 1.2.1 In general the land gently slope upwards, east to west, however, the Barnston Dale cuts deeply through the land at the north of the conservation area.
- 1.2.2 The geology of the area is thought to consist of Triassic upper mottled sandstone, outcropping in places, but generally overlain with boulder clay.

1.3 GENERAL USAGE

- 1.3.1 The buildings of Barnston are generally of either residential or agricultural use. In addition to these most prominent functions there is also the church and neighbouring hall, Women's Institute building, a hat shop and a public house.

1.4 CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY AND STATUTORY DESIGNATIONS

- 1.4.1 Barnston was designated as a Conservation Area in 1983. The current boundary follows an irregular line to include various addresses on Barnston Road, widening at Manor Farm, Bank Farm, along Storeton Lane, around the churchyard and Beech Farm. The boundary extends along Barnston Road northwards beyond the dell and southwards as far as The Lodge and the Women's Institute.
- 1.4.2 There are two grade II listed buildings / groups of buildings within the village: Christ Church and Beech Farm.

2.0 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

2.1 EARLY HISTORY AND ORIGINS OF SURROUNDING AREA

- 2.1.1 At the time of the Domesday survey, the land around Barnston (or Bernstone as it was then referred to as) was owned by William FitzNigel, the second Baron of Halton. This area was divided into 2 moieties, held by Ravenwurt and Leafgeat. One part descended into the possession of the Bennetts of Willaston, who eventually sold it to the then State Surgeon of Ireland, George Macklin. The other was passed, with Raby and other estates, through the Hulse and Troutbeck families before coming into the possession of the Earl of Shrewsbury. Barnston was historically a township within the parish of Woodchurch.
- 2.1.2 Barnston appears to have had a hall, although it was described in 1724 by Bishop Gastrell as being in a ruinous state. Barnston has clearly been a distinct settlement for a number of centuries. This is shown by a number of buildings still standing, which date back to the 18th century, but also in written evidence which describe buildings such as an old tithe barn (near the present hat shop) and an ‘ancient barn’ which was used for schooling and worship before the construction of the 19th century buildings.
- 2.1.3 Barnston appears to have grown up as an agricultural settlement at a junction of 2 routes connecting other Wirral townships. One of the buildings on Bank Farm was once a toll-bar with gates linking across Storeton Lane to the building opposite. Bank House (formerly Townsend Farm) was reportedly one of Barnston’s 3 taverns / inns, which may have been used by people travelling through the village.
- 2.1.3 Although documentary evidence shows that Barnston existed before the Norman conquest, archaeological finds in and around the area seem to suggest that it may have been a settlement many centuries before, with Roman and Bronze Age artefacts found. It is possible that a Roman road, discovered during excavations in nearby Greasby, may have extended through Barnston to Thornton Hough before eventually reaching Willaston and joining the principal route to Chester. The Forest Eyre Roll of 1347 refers to a medieval road passing through the village.

2.2 19TH CENTURY DEVELOPMENT

- 2.2.1 In 1801 Barnston had a population of 129 and its land was of a value that was reportedly lower than any other ownership in the Hundred of Wirral ‘except the sandhills of Meolses and the rocks of Claughton’¹. By 1831, the

¹ P Sulley – Hundred of Wirral (1889)

population had fallen to 112, but by 1845 it had risen considerably to 206. By 1899 there were reported to be 58 dwelling houses.

2.2.2 In 1870 a church and school were constructed, largely funded by Barnston landowner Joseph Hegan of Dawpool. The church was consecrated in June 1871. Slightly later in the 19th century, the vicarage was built and the school was significantly extended. Prior to the erection of these buildings, it is understood that services had been held in an ‘ancient’ barn. Barnston School was established in 1852 on the site of ‘Beechfield’ before moving to the site adjacent to the church.

2.3 20TH AND 21ST CENTURY CHANGES

2.3.1 Very few buildings were constructed in the village after 1900. A comparison between the 1890s and present day OS maps shows little change. Buildings built in the past 100 years include only isolated semi-detached houses, barns and other agricultural buildings and additions to previously existing structures. With the exception of the Fox and Hounds Public House (which was demolished or largely rebuilt in 1910), which serves as a landmark when entering the village from the north, the village would be eminently recognisable from its 1900 form.

2.4 ARCHAEOLOGY

2.4.1 The Merseyside Archaeological Service Historic Environment Record holds accounts of sites of interest in and around the Barnston Conservation Area. Finds / records include:

- in a field to the SW of Beech Farm – a find of a few flints – possibly a worked Bronze Age scraper
- to the west of the church - a record of rectilinear platforms / slight dividing hollows possibly indicating the extent of the medieval settlement.
- In Barnston Dale – several Roman coins found between 1982 and 1984 and a fibula of devolved head-stud type.
- Various pottery near the church and Laburnum Cottage.
- At nearby Woodcroft – a stone artefact found in 1910 - a Neolithic siltstone axe – given to the Liverpool Museum

3.0 LANDSCAPE AND VISTAS

3.1 SETTING AND RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SURROUNDING AREA

3.1.1 Barnston is in one of the most rural parts of the Wirral, within a band of largely undeveloped land stretching along the centre of the peninsula to the outskirts of Birkenhead and Chester. Barnston marks the junction of roads that lead to the historic settlements of Woodchurch, Storeton and Gayton. The village is near the outskirts of the town of Heswall which is used for most local amenities such as shops and schools. Barnston is also close to the largely residential areas of Thingwall and Pensby.

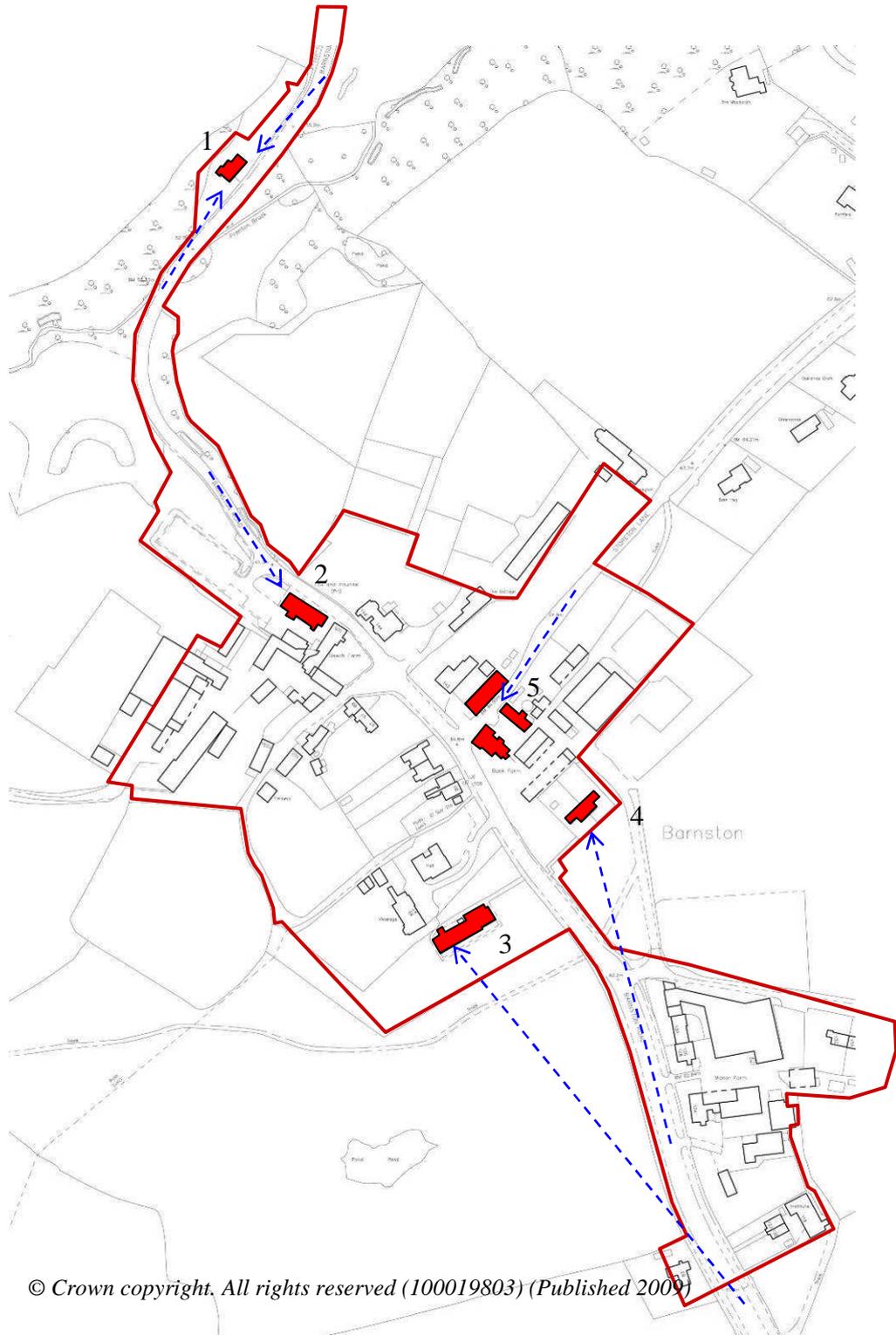
3.2 CHARACTER AND RELATIONSHIP OF SPACES

3.2.1 The character of Barnston is distinctly one of a small rural village that has gradually grown up over a number of centuries. Buildings are all located along or near Barnston Road, Storeton Lane or the small lane leading from between Beech Farm and Laburnum Cottage. Due to the linear nature of the village, few defined spaces are created. There is a small widening of the road at Beech Farm, which marks the site of the former village green. The church, vicarage and village hall (former school) are positioned relative to each other to create an attractive small green.



Small green in front of the vicarage

3.3 VIEWS AND VISTAS WITHIN THE AREA



Map showing key views and vistas within the conservation area

3.3.1 There are relatively few important views within the conservation area, largely due to its linear form. In Barnston, important views tend to be at

points where there is a change in the topography of the land or direction of a road. The following is a list of such views as shown on the map above:

- (1) View from either direction along Barnston Road towards no. 109 / 111
- (2) View from Barnston Dale up towards the Fox and Hounds
- (3) Glimpse view towards the Church from entering the conservation area from the south-east along Barnston Road.
- (4) View towards 136 / 138 Barnston Road from entering the conservation area from the south-east.
- (5) View along Storeton Lane towards the junction with Barnston Road, featuring the converted barn and Bank Farm

3.3.2 Numbers 109 / 111 and 136 / 138 Barnston Road, together with the Fox and Hounds public house are important as buildings acting as visual gateways to the village.

3.3.3 Particularly across the field to the south of the church, there are fine views across the open countryside.



(Top left) View towards no. 109 / 111 Barnston Road; (top right) View from Barnston Dale up towards the Fox and Hounds; (bottom left) Glimpse view towards the Church from entering the conservation area from the south-east along Barnston Road; (bottom right) View towards 136 / 138 Barnston Road on entering the conservation area from the south-east

3.4 GREEN SPACES AND PLANTING

- 3.4.1 There are 4 distinct types of green space and planting within Barnston Village:
- 3.4.2 **Barnston Dale** is an area of lush and relatively dense woodland that cuts across the north of the conservation area. Although only the road and its walls are within the conservation area, the trees are critical to its character, forming a picturesque and atmospheric tunnel as the road dips down before re-emerging into the village.
- 3.4.3 **Agricultural land and features** are seen throughout the conservation area and are important in setting Barnston apart from the ‘urbanisation’ of many other historic villages in Wirral. Like Barnston Dale, the agricultural land outside the conservation area is also critical to its setting and visual character and the field pattern is almost identical to those of the Tithe Map of 1846. The open fields around the village form an attractive backdrop for the conservation area and are critical to its continued agricultural use and character. There are many hedgerows and trees within and adjacent to fields, which are important both visually and ecologically. From the village, there also exist views across open fields to rolling hills and attractive groups of trees beyond. Hedges, consisting of mixed and largely native species, are seen in a number of instances along Barnston Road and around the boundaries of individual properties. The high hedges and trees along the sides of Storeton Lane form a particularly attractive approach to the village from the east.
- 3.4.4 **The Churchyard and surroundings** have their own distinct landscape character. The approach to the church from Barnston Road is via a pathway lined with mature trees. The trees, of a variety of species, continue around the churchyard, visually enclosing the space. The rear of the vicarage also appears to be attractively planted with trees and shrubs, but to its front there is a large area of lawn, which allows for a largely uninterrupted visual connection between the church and the church hall (former school).
- 3.4.5 **Domestic planting and landscaping** is seen around most houses. Although not of a particularly agricultural character, many of the gardens are attractive and appropriate within a rural setting. Gardens that contribute to the character of the conservation area are typically not particularly formal, with large shrubs or trees ‘softening’ the handmade lines of buildings and hard landscaping. Native species of planting such as holly, yew and hawthorn are regularly seen and are visually appropriate, even when used in ‘well-manicured’ shapes and forms. The use of native species also helps promote wildlife, even within domesticated areas of land. There are a number of good examples of hedging along front boundaries to Barnston Road.



(Top left and right) trees within the church yard; (bottom left) an attractive hedge along the front boundary to a dwelling; (bottom right) trees and hedges / shrubs along Storeton Lane.

4.0 TOWNSCAPE AND PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS

4.1 GRAIN, SCALE, REPETITION AND DIVERSITY

4.1.1 As with most agricultural villages that have gradually grown over a long period, Barnston has an irregular grain and there is very little repetition of building types.

4.1.2 All buildings, with the exception of the church and vicarage, are of no greater than 2 storeys in height.

4.2 PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS AND FEATURES

4.2.1 The following buildings have a higher historic, social or architectural status or are of particular importance as being landmarks:

- Christ Church
- The Vicarage
- The Church Hall (former school)
- The Fox and Hounds public house
- Beech Farm
- No. 109 / 111 Barnston Road

4.3 BOUNDARIES AND SURFACES

4.3.1 The principal adopted roads (Barnston Road and Storeton Lane) are of a modern tarmaced construction. Pavements exist on both sides of Barnston Road only where it widens at the south of the conservation area up to the junction with Storeton Lane. The narrowest sections of roads within the conservation area, including Storeton Lane have no, or very narrow, pavements. It is likely that Barnston would not have had pavements until more recent decades. They were constructed, presumably for safety with the growth of through traffic, with modern materials including tarmac and concrete paving slabs and kerbs.

4.3.2 Leading off the public adopted roads, are a few areas where historic surfaces are visible. There is a cobbled surface with rough stone channel to the lane leading south-westwards from Beech Farm. The small path to the north of the village hall has a surface made up with textured engineering pavements.



Cobbled surface to the lane leading south-westwards from Beech Farm

4.3.3 Boundary walls within the conservation area are a key part of its visual character. Most walls are constructed of local red sandstone. These walls are used around both agricultural and domestic properties. These vary slightly in construction and design, but are all of coursed rubble, with very little dressing or squaring-off of stones. In some instances walls have capping stones of a simple shape, in others they larger heavier stones capping the wall. Some walls appear to be of a dry-stone construction, apparently without mortar.

4.3.2 In some instances, walls perform a retaining function, such as when Barnston Road winds down into Barnston Dale. Buildings can also form a boundary to the road as on the Storeton Lane defile towards its junction with Barnston Road.





Stone boundary walls in the conservation area.

5.0 ARCHITECTURE, MATERIALS AND DETAILS

5.1 PROMINENT STYLES

5.1.1 Historic buildings in Barnston are generally of a simple style and their forms are largely functional, with very little applied detailing. They can be categorised into general architectural styles or building types:

- Agricultural buildings – constructed from locally sourced materials of brick and stone with slate roofs and often extended or altered in an ‘ad-hoc’ manner. Forms are simple and rectilinear and the buildings have relatively low pitched roofs. Openings are generally small and the buildings have a ‘robust’ character.



Agricultural building in the conservation area

- 18th century – mid 19th century houses – buildings constructed of locally sourced material. Buildings are generally of simple rectilinear forms, although they may have outriggers and later extensions. The positioning of openings has some order although not in the manner of the contemporary urban houses.
- Vernacular Revival / Gothic – Buildings with details derived from other traditional building types. Influences include Gothic, Jacobean, Elizabethan and Medieval building periods. In contrast to the traditional agricultural buildings, roofs are more steeply pitched and elevations are relatively detailed. Plan forms are generally more complex. Gables are used regularly as features in the design of buildings, and like openings, are shaped to reflect the style of the building. Chimneys are typically more prominent on buildings of these styles. Buildings in this category include the church, vicarage and village hall.



Buildings of a Vernacular Revival / Gothic influence in the conservation area

- Arts and Crafts – buildings with particular attention to detail and using elements of traditional craftsmanship in their decoration. The Fox and Hounds Public House has decorative leading to its window panes, some decorative timberwork and oriel windows. All these features are reminiscent of Arts and Crafts buildings, although it is simpler in its level of decoration. Similarly, no. 136 / 138 Barnston Road, is an attractive semi-detached building, drawing its form from Arts and Crafts houses built a couple of decades earlier. However, its level of decoration is noticeably simpler. The design and good maintenance of the building possibly indicates that it may be, or may have been an estate cottage.



Buildings within the conservation area with details / form originating in the Arts and Crafts style.

5.2 KNOWN ARCHITECTS AND DESIGNERS

5.2.1 No information concerning the architects of any of the general houses or agricultural buildings within the conservation area was available at the time of writing this report.

5.2.2 The prominent 19th century architect George Edmund Street (1824-1881) designed Christ Church and the village hall (former school). He was based in London and his most important work was the Royal Courts of Justice, built between 1868 and 1881. He was a prolific designer of churches and designed a number within the north-west including: St John, Cotebrook,

Cheshire (1874-5), All Saints in Bolton (1869-71), St Margaret, Toxteth (1868-9) and St Nicholas, Whiston (1864-8).



Christ Church, designed by prominent London based architect G.E. Street

- 5.2.3 The neighbouring vicarage was designed by architect J. Francis Doyle, who was responsible for the reconstruction of the churches of St Peter in nearby Lower Heswall and St Mary and St Helen in Neston. He also designed St Nicholas in Wallasey in 1910-11, the Royal Insurance Building, Dale Street Liverpool in 1896-1903 and the White Star Line Building (alongside the well-known Norman Shaw) in Liverpool.

5.3 MATERIALS

- 5.3.1 The most common walling materials seen within the conservation area are red sandstone and red brick. The sandstone would have been quarried locally and the bricks probably made just down the road at the brick and tile works. There are a few instances of render used (e.g. The Barn, Ivy Farm Cottage), although in the case of the older buildings this may be a later replacement to lime-washing, which would have been quite prevalent. Roofs are generally of welsh slate although some of the later / higher status buildings have plain clay tile roofs.

5.4 TYPICAL FEATURES AND DETAILS

5.4.1 **Windows** within the Barnston conservation area that enhance its character are principally one of a few types:

- Painted timber vertically sliding, multi-paned sashes – seen on the higher status houses. A few of these are arch-headed.
- Painted timber, multi-paned casements – on most low key houses and many agricultural buildings. These are likely to have been horizontal sliding sashes originally.
- Metal multi-paned windows on agricultural buildings with inward-opening upper panes.
- Decorative windows, often with leaded lights.



Windows in the conservation area

5.4.2 Windows within the conservation area are generally relatively small, positioned as single windows and have little or no decoration to their surrounds.

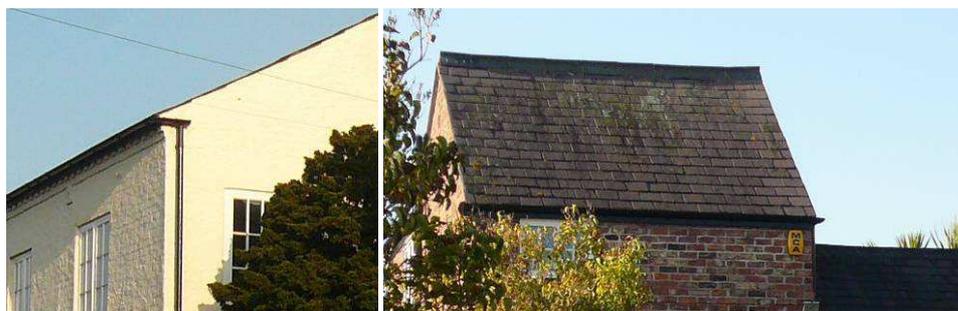
5.4.3 **Doors** within the conservation area are often not highly apparent from the road, being either recessed from the building frontage or on a side elevation. Traditionally doors would have been plain, without decoration or glazing. Timber vertical boarded doors generally prevail, where doors are of a traditional construction.

- 5.4.5 **Chimneys** play a part in the visual composition of most buildings, although they are typically of a simple rectilinear design, with little in the way of projections. Only a few buildings have tall, visually dominant chimneys; these buildings tend to be of a higher status. Terracotta or buff clay pots of varied design are generally seen on top of most stacks.



Chimneys within the conservation area.

- 5.4.6 **Roof details** to almost all buildings within the conservation area are, or once would have been, very simple. There are few barge board or parapets on gables. Eaves have little in the way of an overhang and any detail is provided by 1 or 2 courses of projecting / dentilled brickwork. Ridges are generally unadorned.



Roof details in the conservation area

- 5.4.7 **Gateposts** are either of a simple timber construction (to farm buildings) or of a large, simple / unornamented sandstone shape. Both are of an agricultural character.



Stone gate posts with the conservation area

5.4.8 **Public realm features** within the village are relatively simple and often of a traditional form. There are a few examples of historic public realm features such as signs, posts and gates constructed of, or at least made to appear to be of either cast or wrought iron. Whilst generally more modern, simple timber signs and posts are appropriate within the conservation area and can enhance its appearance



Cast iron sign and post.

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 categorizes each building, or group of buildings into the following groupings:

- A: (Red) – Buildings that are critical to the character of the area: typically these may be landmark buildings and / or historic buildings with most of their original character retained
- B: (Yellow) – Buildings that contribute positively to the character of the conservation area: historic 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 have been very few buildings built since the middle of the 20th century. A relatively small number of barns have been constructed next to older farmsteads. The few modern houses (132/134 Barnston Road and a new building forming part of ‘The Cottage’ on the eastern side of the road) are set well back from the road and of inauspicious materials and forms. In such low numbers these modern buildings have a neutral affect on the historic character of the conservation area.



Modern buildings within the conservation area

6.3 UNSYMPATHETIC EXTENSIONS

- 6.3.1 There are relatively few recent extensions within the conservation area of a significant size. The most unsympathetic of extensions are those that confuse the original form of the building and lessen the overall perception of quality. Good extensions either use the materials and detailing of the original building or are of a modern design and construction that is of a high quality but adequately contrasting to the original. In conversion a number of former agricultural buildings, forms associated with domestic buildings, such as porches, have been attached to the original structure.



Extensions within the conservation area. The left hand photo shows a cottage that has been extended in recent years by about 50%. The modern render over both the older and modern parts confuses the original form. The right hand photo illustrates how an attractive porch added to the front of a building (together with other changes) can have an adverse effect on its original agricultural character.

6.4 UNSYMPATHETIC ALTERATIONS

- 6.4.1 There have been many changes to the buildings within the conservation area. These changes are often detrimental to the architectural character of the building and adversely affect the perceived quality of the street or even area as a whole. These changes include:

- The insertion of new or alteration to existing openings, particularly to agricultural buildings during conversion
- Replacing original windows, with modern designs and materials such as UPVC
- The replacement of doors
- The replacement of slate roof and plain clay tile coverings with modern tiles
- Rendering / painting over originally exposed stonework
- Poor quality repairs, particularly where using a change of material
- The installation of rooflights



To the south-west and north-west elevations of Barn House, most of the building's agricultural character was apparently lost during conversion. The domestic nature of the windows and doors together with the render finish to the walls disguise its original appearance. To the south-east the barn's largely blank brick / stone elevation retains the legibility of the original form, although the building's appearance is marred by obtrusive modern pointing.



(left) Changes to the windows and roof covering adversely affect the building's character and its contribution to the conservation area. (right) Although probably necessary to prevent damage by vandals, the application of perspex over the leaded lights of Christ Church's windows makes it impossible to appreciate their intricacy from the outside.



Management issues with the conservation area: (left) obtrusive modern pointing over the face of stonework. Artificial colorants are also used giving it an unnatural colour; (middle) Painted brickwork and inappropriate modern windows; (right) An air conditioning unit mounted in an obtrusive position on the Fox and Hounds.



A particularly historic house that has unfortunately had a number of modern alteration carried out, including the installation of UPVC windows and boxed soffits. These changes particularly jar with the original character of the building.

6.4.2 The foremost alteration to historic fabric within the conservation area is the replacement of original doors and windows. These alterations are often well intentioned – to improve the thermal or acoustic performance or to reduce maintenance requirements for instance. However, the visual effect of the replacement windows, particularly on the architecturally simple buildings, is immense. The original sash windows would have had very slim profiles, giving an elegant appearance. In contrast, a UPVC or aluminium replacement, particularly when holding a thick double glazed unit, has

considerably thicker framing elements, which are more obtrusive visually and will let much less light into the building.

- 6.4.3 The reconfiguration of opening panes (particularly when replacing sashes with top-hung casements) dramatically changes the architectural character of the building. Where windows are replaced in timber, these can also adversely affect the appearance of the building where the original detailing is not followed and often the quality of the timber is far substandard to the original, giving it a short lifespan. Secondary glazing can be used and will always produce a more satisfactory visual result than a double glazed equivalent. The use of UPVC windows is fairly prevalent amongst the unlisted buildings.



Replacement windows within the conservation area: this photo illustrates that even though UPVC windows can be manufactured to approximately the same form as an original casement, they are of a lesser quality visually. In this instance the opening lights require much larger frames than the fixed ones and the intermediate mullions (painted black on the originals) are lost. The glazing beads are within the double glazed unit, instead of forming an integral part of the casement. This is immediately apparent and this adversely affects the visual character of the window.

- 6.4.5 There are a number of further issues, which do not involve the loss or damage to historic fabric but have a detrimental affect on the appearance of the conservation area. All of these matters could be changed without or with little cost, therefore can be considered management issues. These include:

- The installation of service fixings and fixtures such as rainwater and waste pipes in prominent positions
- Changes to the landscape setting, for example large areas of hard landscaping for car parking.
- The installation of satellite dishes and aerials.
- The installation of modern standard signage and associated posts.

6.5 LOSS AND DEVELOPMENT PRESSURES

6.5.1 Relatively little has changed in the village within the past 100 years and it would probably be largely recognisable in comparison to its appearance two centuries ago. Few buildings have been lost over that time, with the only notable examples being as follows:

- The replacement of the original Fox and Hounds Public House in the early 20th century
- Between current hat shop and the green (now only a green in name) once reportedly stood 2 ancient thatched cottages, one the village shop and the other a tavern known as the ‘Traveller’s Rest’
- A village hall and bowling green are shown on the 1930s OS map (highlighted in red), but are no longer present.

6.5.2 At present there seems to be little development pressure in Barnston, despite its attractive setting and close proximity to Heswall and Birkenhead. The area lies within the Green Belt. According to the Wirral’s Unitary Development Plan planning permission will only be granted for new development in limited circumstances within the Green Belt, including infilling in designated villages (which does not include Barnston Conservation Area) and dwellings for key workers subject to proven need. Furthermore, Barnston is outside Wirral’s priority regeneration areas in which, according to the Interim Housing Policy of October 2005, house building should be focused.

7.0 SUMMARY OF SPECIAL CHARACTER

7.1 The following is a list of features that are part of Barnston Conservation Area's special character:

- Historic village dating back to before the Domesday Survey.
- The village has grown up gradually over time, with no one architectural style or historical period dominating.
- The historic village has retained separation from neighbouring suburban and is unusual within the context of Wirral, for having a largely agricultural use and character.
- Roads are generally narrow and slightly winding, following a presumably medieval street pattern.
- Buildings are general simple in character, but there is very little repetition of building forms, other than within individual terraces.
- Sandstone boundary walls are an important feature within the area and along the roads leading to it.
- Red Cheshire sandstone is the most prominent building material in the village, although red brick is also widely used. The majority of roofs with historic coverings are slated.
- Openings and features such as chimneys are generally simple in character.
- Vertical sliding sash windows are a common feature in the higher status buildings. Many simple multi-paned timber casements are old and visually appropriate.
- There are very few modern buildings and the village has virtually retained its 19th century form intact.
- The church and former school were designed by well-known Victorian architect G.E. Street.