

Policy CH5: Hamilton Square Conservation Area

In relation to Hamilton Square Conservation Area the principal planning objectives for the area will be to:

(i) preserve the historic character, formal setting and sense of enclosure within the central square;

(ii) retain the unity of design and elevational treatment of buildings overlooking the central gardens;

(iii) preserve the wider visual setting of the Square by controlling the design and scale of new buildings located outside but visible from the central square; and

(iv) secure renewed economic, residential and leisure activity within the Area.

Notwithstanding the designation of the site as Urban Greenspace under Proposal GR2, priority will be given to retaining the historic and formal character of the central garden area.

Reasoned justification:

Hamilton Square Conservation Area was designated in July 1977 and extended in June 1994. It contains the largest, Grade 1 Listed, Victorian square outside London and has major significance for the historical development of Wirral. It represents one of the first residential areas for businessmen and the professional classes to be built in the newly formed town of Birkenhead, following the introduction of steam ferries across the River Mersey.

The Area still forms the primary focus for the commercial office centre of Birkenhead and is also a focus for urban tourism together with other nearby attractions allied to the Birkenhead Heritage Trail. However, the future prosperity of the Area relies upon the continued promotion of a strongly proactive, mixed land-use strategy. This strategy has been confirmed by the allocation of Single Regeneration Budget resources for the period 1995 to 2002 to the Hamilton Quarter.

The principal character of the Area derives from the grand scale of the architecture, the sense of enclosure and the general uniformity of design and elevational treatment throughout the central square. The objective of Policy CH5 is, therefore, to preserve these elements in the design and appearance of the Square and to retain the open aspect and formal arrangement of the central garden area.

The boundary of the Conservation Area includes period property along Argyle Street, Hamilton Street and Market Street which provide an important and complementary "visual envelope" to the main Square. However, this boundary does not include all the buildings or land which have potential to detract from its wider visual setting. Policy CH5, therefore, requires all new development located outside but visible from the central Square to be of a scale and design appropriate to maintaining the Area's historic character.