

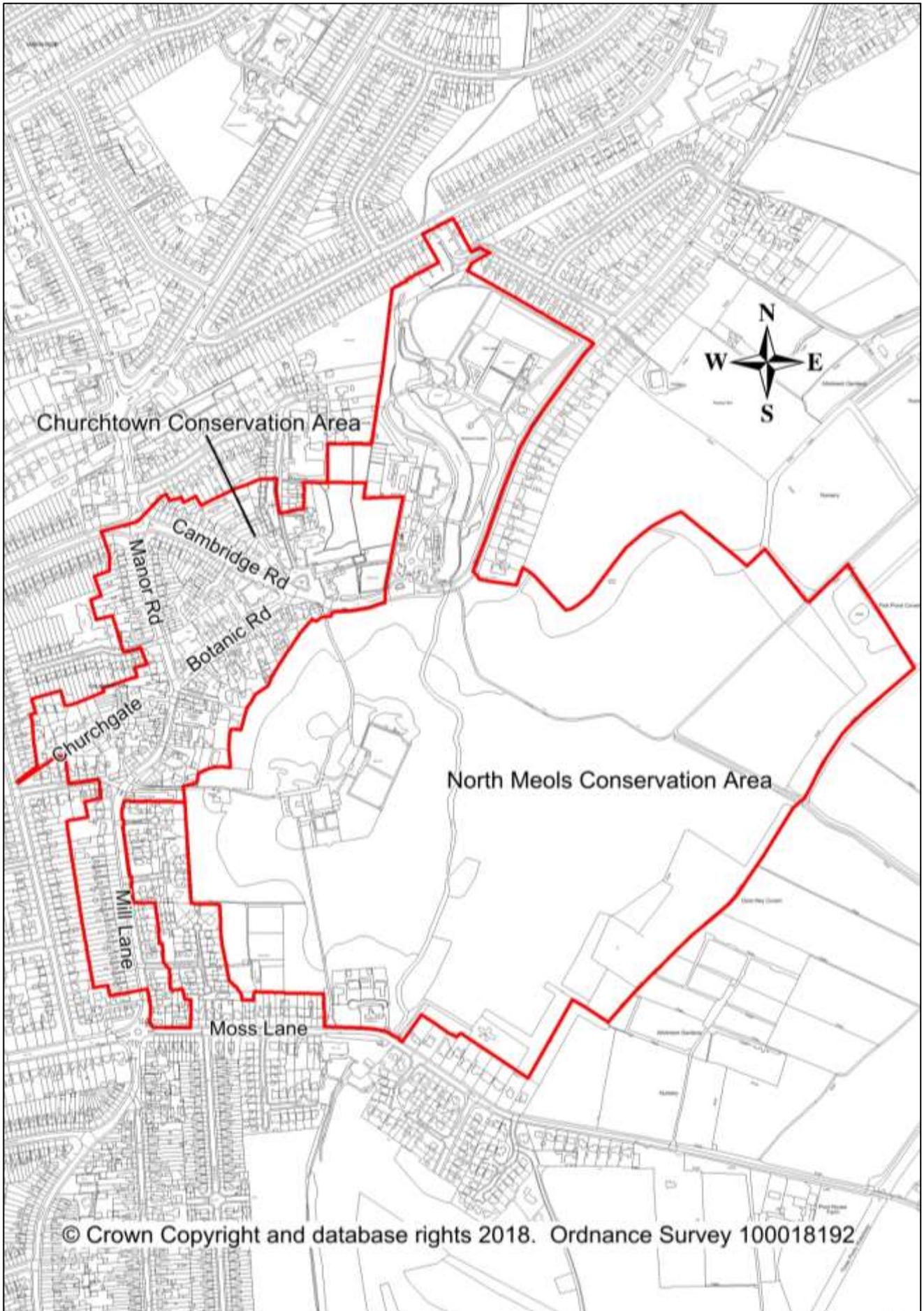
# Churchtown and North Meols

## Conservation Area Appraisal

Adopted May 2009



This Conservation Area Appraisal was prepared by Donald Insall Associates in August 2008 and amended following public consultation in February 2009 and was fully adopted by Sefton Council including the suggested boundary changes shown below on 7th May 2009. For more information on boundary changes please see Section 9.0



## CHURCHTOWN AND NORTH MEOLS CONSERVATION AREAS APPRAISAL

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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 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.

Sefton Council has declared 25 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 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 region's environmental and cultural assets.

The principles of these documents are further supported by Sefton 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.

### **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 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.

### **Need for an appraisal**

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 (eg. buildings, boundaries, trees, surfaces, etc.) to the area's 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.

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background**

This report has been prepared by Donald Insall Associates Ltd on behalf of Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council. Its purpose is to clarify the designation of the Conservation Area, which will protect and enhance the character of the area around Churchtown and North Meols. Designation as a Conservation Area provides the Local Planning Authority with additional powers to protect and enhance the area's special characteristics.

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

The scope of this Conservation Area Appraisal is based on the guidelines published by English Heritage 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 former uses and their influence on plan form or building type
- Archaeological significance
- Setting of the Conservation Area and its relationship with the surrounding landscape
- Character and relationship of spaces
- Contribution made by green spaces, trees, hedges, etc.
- Architectural and historic qualities of buildings
- Contribution made by key unlisted buildings
- Prevalent and traditional building materials
- Local details
- Extent of loss, intrusion or damage
- Existence of any neutral areas

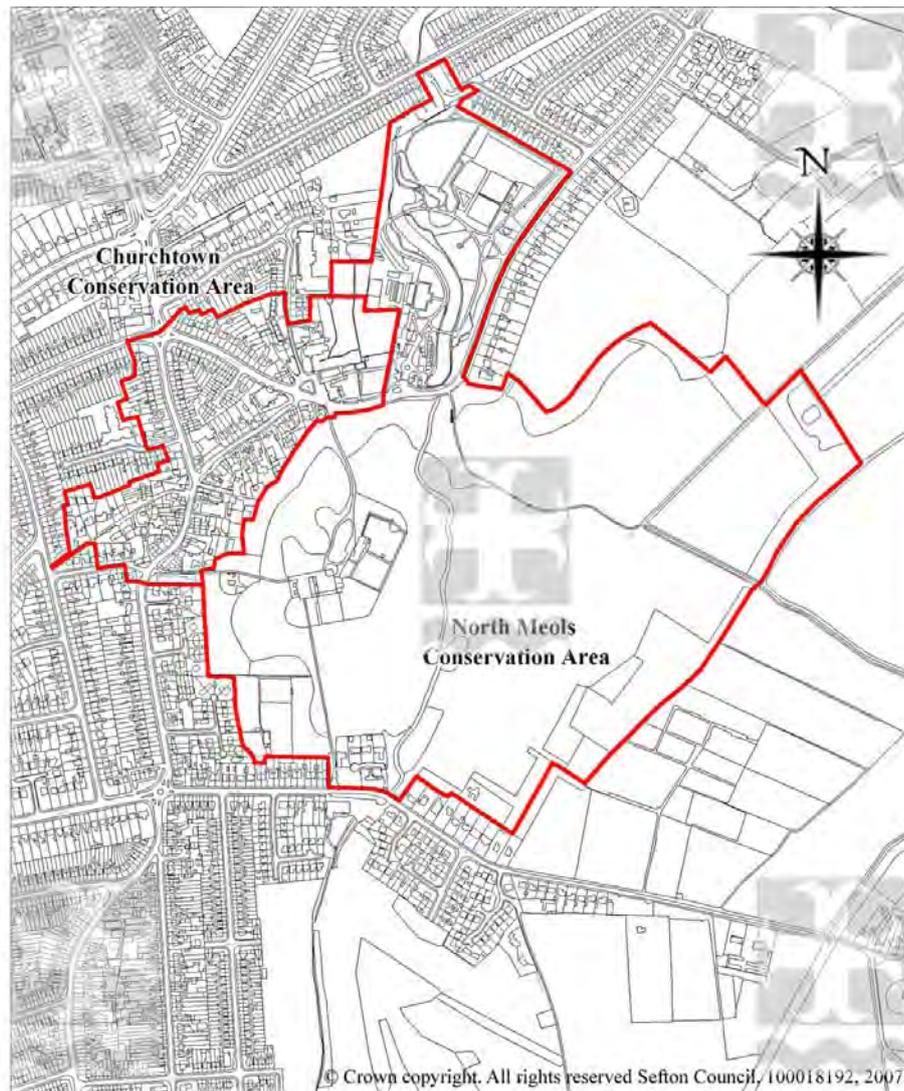
The document has been structured to encompass these areas of study and concludes with recommendations for amendments to the Conservation Area boundary.

It is the aim of this appraisal to identify and examine those elements which individually and collectively define the essential character of the area.

### **1.3 Extent of the Conservation Areas**

The study covers the Conservation Areas of Churchtown and North Meols. They were designated separately and have different characteristics. The development pressures on the North Meols area are likely to be small and so the study encompasses both areas despite their obvious differences.

The boundary is shown on the following map (Figure 1)

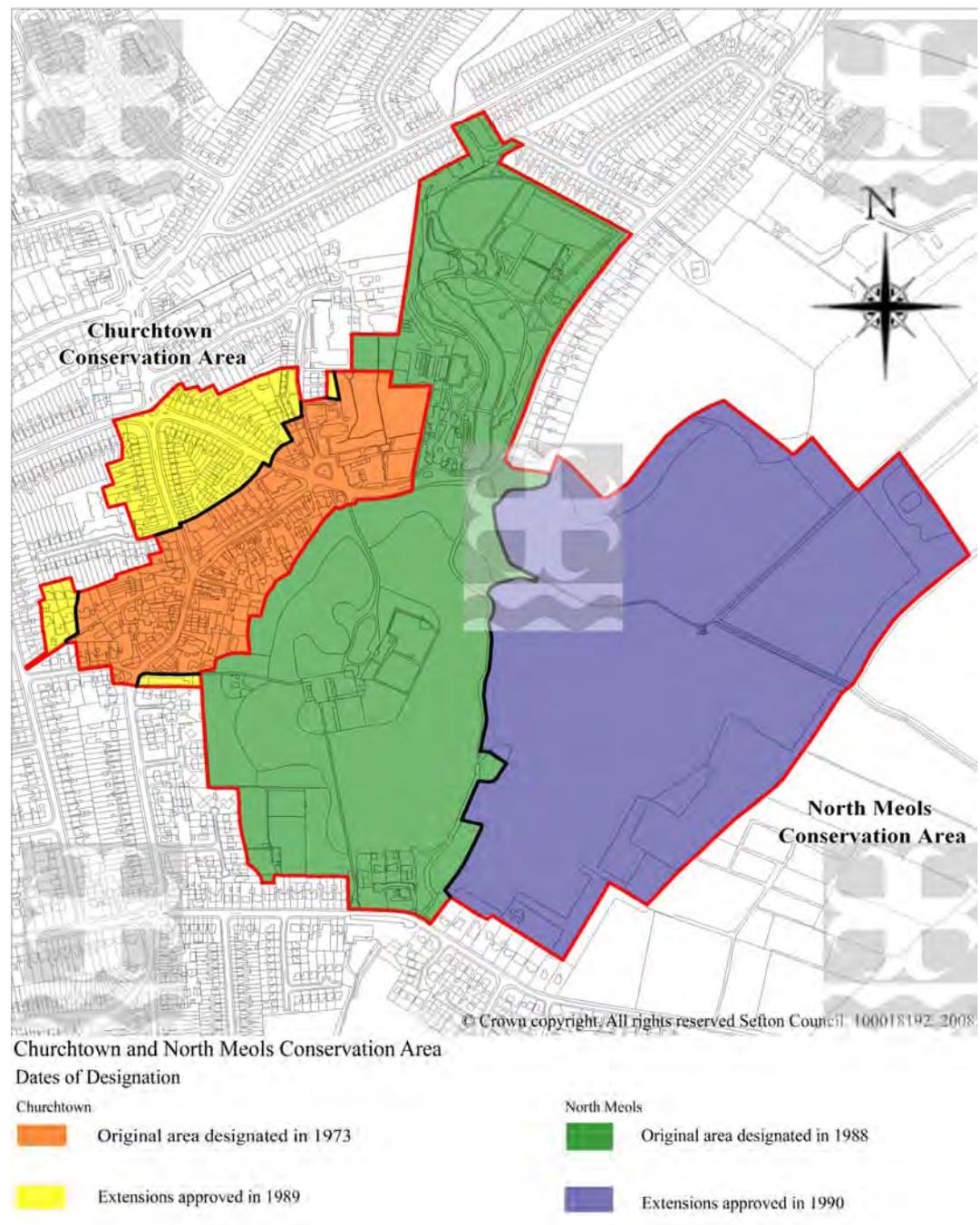


*Figure 1. Extent of Conservation Areas*

#### **1.4 Designation**

The Churchtown and North Meols Conservation Areas were formally designated as Conservation Areas by Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council on 14<sup>th</sup> November 1973 and 19<sup>th</sup> October 1988 respectively. Extensions were approved to the Churchtown Conservation area in 1989 and to North Meols in 1990 and are shown on the map following. (Figure 2).

Figure 2 – Dates of Designation of Conservation Areas



### 1.5 General Identity

Between them these Conservation Areas have a number of distinct character areas - Churchtown village centre with its mix of pre-Victorian houses and other uses, the additional planned Victorian urban development, the late Victorian Botanic Gardens, and North Meols Hall park which is former agricultural land converted to a landscape park.

Taken together they cover part of the early settlement of North Meols (the previous name of Churchtown) which dates back to Viking times and considerably predates the

largely Victorian conurbation of Southport to the west. Apart from an area immediately to the east, the modern suburban developments of Southport have almost completely engulfed the earlier village.

The separate character areas will be appraised separately and as a unity.

## **1.6 Survey**

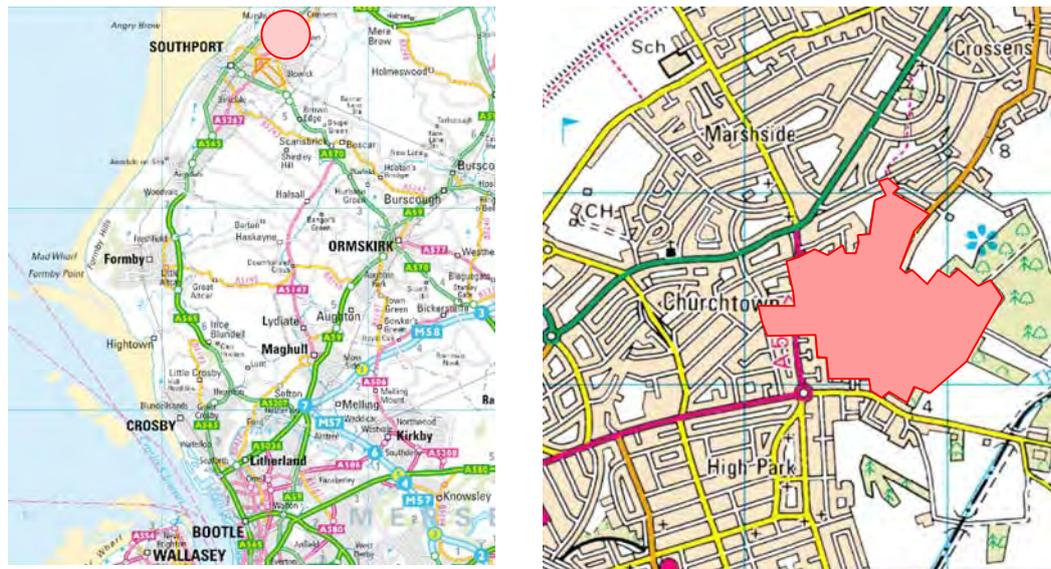
The survey of the Churchtown and North Meols area was undertaken over two separate days, 4<sup>th</sup> July 2006 and 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2006. This approach allows for the following:-

- opportunity to view, photograph and appreciate the area in differing weather conditions
- revisit to check information gathered and correct any omissions
- correlation of desk-based research with physical fabric

## 2.0 LOCATION AND CONTEXT

### 2.1 Location

The Churchtown and North Meols Conservation Areas abut each other and are located approximately 1.5 miles to the north east of the centre of Southport, and are on the edge of the conurbation. The area is almost at the most northerly point of the coastal band covered by Sefton Borough Council, abutting closely onto Lancashire.



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*Figure 3 - Plan showing location of Churchtown and North Meols Conservation Areas*

### 2.2 Topography and Geology

Churchtown is towards the north end of a low coastal spit of land on the south bank of the Ribble estuary. The surface geology is largely silt with blown sand to the seaward side. On the landward side was an area of water, later marsh called Martin Mere which was drained in the 17th century to form good agricultural land. The North Meols area is on the boundary of the land spit and the former Martin Mere. The underlying geology is Keuper Marl, clay and shale.

### 2.3 Uses

As described the two Conservation Areas contain three distinct character zones, and the land uses largely give rise to these distinctions.

Churchtown has a mix of uses characteristic of a former self contained village settlement. The focal point is the church, clustered around which is a mix of residential, pubs, shops and services. Some small industrial type uses exist but are rather ancillary and occupy backland sites.

Meols Hall is a large private residence with medieval origins but much altered and extended and includes some highly regarded recent classical work. Near to it is a cluster of former service and agricultural buildings of good quality, all set in open parkland with a tree lined perimeter.

The Botanic Gardens is a late Victorian park with a lake, bridges, mature trees, formal planting and a group of buildings including a fernery, museum and glasshouses.

#### **2.4 Local Economy**

The local employment is mainly in the retail, service and small scale financial service sectors. Restaurant and catering are well represented, with some small general stores and certain more specialist retail outlets. A number of the outlets are tailored towards the visitor market, that in the Botanic Gardens exclusively so.

The village has a strongly localised feel with individual or family owned shops (e.g. the hat shop) as opposed to chains, and is a specific, though small scale shopping destination.

#### **2.5 General Condition**

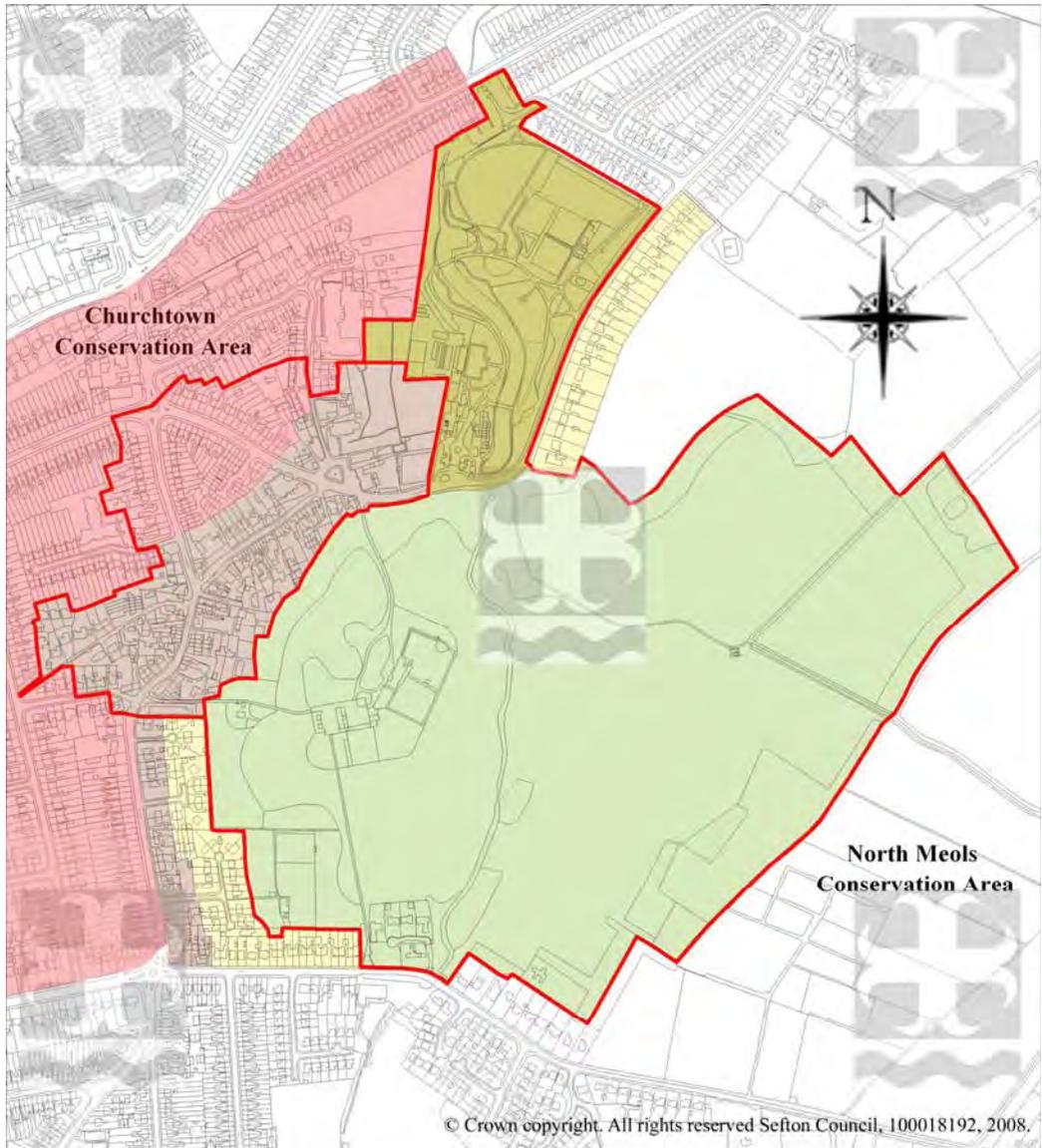
The general condition of the fabric of the Conservation Areas is good. Buildings are largely in good repair and well maintained and there are not many obvious visually jarring notes. Visible public and private open spaces are generally well maintained.

#### **2.6 Study Area Boundaries (See Figure 1)**

The boundary of the North Meols Conservation Area is, in most part a very obvious one, relating to the land holdings of the two main tracts of land incorporated – the Fleetwood - Hesketh family at Meols Hall and the Borough Council owners of the Botanic Gardens.

The boundary of the Churchtown Conservation Area is much less easily drawn. The core of the area is constituted by the medieval village. Parts of the Victorian extension to the village are included but the definition of the boundary is less clear on the ground and there are possibilities for adjustment which are discussed more fully in Section 9.

### 3.0 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT



*Figure 4 Map showing main phases of historical development*

- Open farmland, later parkland
- Medieval settlement
- Victorian gardens
- Victorian development
- Mainly 20thC development

### **3.1 Early History and Origins**

The village of Churchtown, formerly known as North Meols is clustered around the parish church of St. Cuthbert. The church site reputedly marks one of the resting places of the coffin of St. Cuthbert in the ninth century when his devotees were repeatedly on the move to avoid the Danish invaders.

The name 'Meols' seems to derive from an early word for sand, the term 'meals' or 'males' being a Norwegian term for sandbanks, suggesting a Viking settlement. The village is towards the end of a spit of land which stretched northwards from the mouth of the Mersey enclosing a lake on its landward side which became known as Martin Mere. As the lake was slowly drained it became an area of highly fertile peat land (known as moss or carr) which gave rise to the strong horticultural industry of West Lancashire. The discovery of wharfs below ground in the vicinity of the gates of Meols Hall indicated that the retreat of the sea is relatively recent in geological time.

The other focus of influence in the area was Meols Hall. A watermill formerly stood within what is now the grounds of Meols Hall on the watercourse known as The Pool or (tellingly) Otterpool, which was a former eel fishery.

The development of the village and community was very much constrained by its location at the end of what amounted to a long peninsula, with the sea and dunes to the west and north and the wetlands of the Mere to the east. Approach to the area was largely from the south, with limited trackways across the Mere from the isolated islands of higher land to the east e.g. Rufford, Burscough and Ormskirk. There is evidence of a former walkway following the line of Churchgate which led back to Birkdale and the hinterland to the south. The other main route, later a street on the line of Cambridge Road led to the sea and gave access across Marshfields to the area where fishing boats were moored (hardly a harbour). The area known as Sugar Houses near the junction of Cambridge Road and Manor Road is where reputedly in 1565 a cargo of sugar and potatoes was washed up from a shipwreck, and where potatoes were first grown in England! True or not this indicates how much closer was the sea then, and how narrow the peninsula of dry land.

In 1222 a licence was granted by Henry III to Robert Bussell for the holding of a market in North Meols. It is most likely that the original market was held in the stretch of Botanic Road between Manor Road and Peet's Lane. This area acquired the name of 'Cocks Clod'.

The sparseness of population of West Lancashire in the early period is reflected in the size of the parishes, North Meols parish being some ten miles long. The relative isolation led to a degree of insularity and self sufficiency. Building materials for the modest houses were largely locally sourced with post and mud walls and thatched roofs. The land is somewhat unstable as might be expected of deposited material with a peat content and so this type of lightweight constructions was appropriate. However brick began to be used for better class properties in the C18th and was use in rebuilding the ordinary houses in the C19th.

### **3.2 Development of the Churchtown and North Meols area**

Over time the coastline has moved further westwards due to the deposition of estuarine silts from the Ribble and the Mersey. Land reclamation started in the 1250s with the construction of a sea embankment by the Cistercians along what is now Bankfield Lane. The construction of various sea-cops (embankments) gradually pushed the sea further back.

The large scale reclamation of the moss land and Martin Mere happened from the C17th onwards. A main drain known as the Sluice runs across land to the east from the remains of Martin Mere to the mouth of the Ribble to the north. The remains of a network of largely rectilinear drainage ditches can be seen in the farmland on the east side.

With the draining of the Mere and the reclamation of land from the sea, agriculture developed considerably and communications to the north east and east were improved. This led to an increase in prosperity, but the economy was largely based on agriculture, fishing and cottage industries. The handloom weaving of silk appeared in the C18th.

Apart from the increase in numbers of small cottages, agricultural buildings and inns the impact of this change on the physical fabric of the village was not great, and it is not until the mid C19th that great change was experienced.

There was a strong local fishing industry built upon shellfish and shrimps from the shallow waters of the Ribble Estuary later developing into deeper sea fishing. Apart from this, little attention was paid to the sea by ordinary people until the C19th. It was regarded as hostile and destructive and to be avoided unless necessity required otherwise.

However the late C18th and early C19th discovery of the benefits of sea bathing and sea air led by the king begat a change in attitude. In the south, the new resort for London society was Brighton, in the east Yorkshire society began a summer migration to Scarborough whereas in the north west one of the emerging resorts was Southport.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century visitors began to frequent North Meols for bathing in the summer, staying in the local cottages. In 1792 an enterprising Mr. Sutton of North Meols seeing the advantages of the location for bathing and taking the air built a lodging house at the hamlet of South Hawes, in the south part of the township of North Meols. It was a shaky start and not until the closing years of the century did others follow the development lead. The hotel was rebuilt in 1798 as the 'Original Hotel' (later renamed the Royal), and at a grand banquet it is reputed that the hamlet was renamed Southport. From this period on the town grew rapidly. In 1810 Southport had about 100 inhabitants, in 1835 about 300, but a sudden growth, spurred on by the arrival of the railways led to the 1861 census recording over 10,000 residents!

The Hesketh family, owners of Meols Hall were strongly influential in the layout of the new town and in the early 1830s Sir Peter Fleetwood Hesketh was instrumental in laying out Lord Street and its surroundings.

The Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway built an 18 mile line north to Southport from Liverpool in the 1850s, followed by the Cheshire Lines Committee's more circuitous line in the 1880s. In 1878 the West Lancashire company constructed a line north east to Preston, with a station at Churchtown opening in 1882. The line was closed in the 1960s but its route can be readily traced.

A horse drawn tramway was constructed to serve the Botanic gardens in 1874, approaching from the south along Botanic Road. New tramsheds were constructed on Cambridge Road in 1878 and the system was converted to run on electricity in 1900, finally being replaced by omnibuses on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1935.

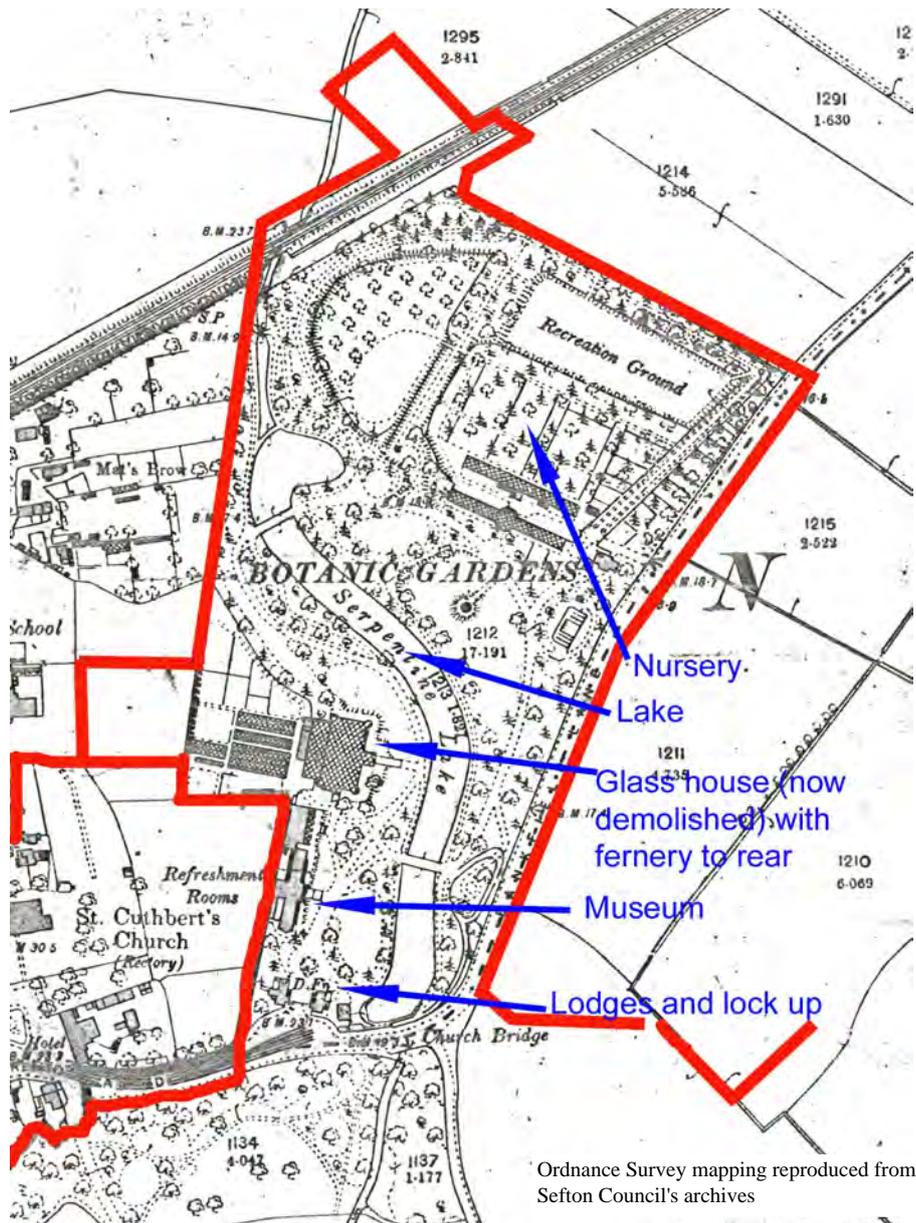
By 1875 the village had been absorbed by the expanding suburbs of Southport and its name was changed to Churchtown to reflect the difference between the large ecclesiastical Parish of North Meols and the restricted area of the village itself.

### **3.3 The development of the Botanic Gardens**

Until the early 1870's one of the principal attractions for visitors to Churchtown was the Strawberry Gardens on land of about 20 acres to the east of the church belonging to the Hesketh family.

A particular feature of the north west, although found in other areas with favourable strawberry growing conditions, strawberry gardens appeared from the early C19th on as a place of resort. The Belle Vue Zoo in Manchester started life as the Strawberry Gardens or Jennison's Gardens which apart from the strawberries had a menagerie and other exotic attractions.

The strawberry gardens were obviously an attraction to the new Southport visitors who would have arrived on the horse drawn tram. However, perhaps because their popularity was fading, and because the enterprising worthies of Southport, particularly the Mayor, Walter Smith wished to increase the town's attractions, the site was acquired by the Southport and Churchtown Botanic Gardens and Museum Company with a view to development. The site was re-opened as the Botanic Gardens in 1874 with an admission charge of 3d; however with the completion of the museum, conservatory, fernery and refreshment rooms the price was raised to 4d in 1876.



**Figure 5 Site Plan of Botanic Gardens taken from 1893 Ordnance Survey plan**

The Fernery and Museum were designed by Mellor and Sutton of Southport, and the builder was George Duxfield of Southport.

The Gardens contained a number of striking and important structures – the lodges and lock up, the lake and its bridges, the large conservatory (now demolished), the fernery and the museum. There was also a menagerie and aviary.

With the development of the Pleasure Gardens, the pier, bandstands and other attractions on Southport's foreshore, the Gardens declined in the early C20th until the bankruptcy of the holding company led to closure in 1922. In July 1932 the land was sold to a Mr W.J. Poole who submitted a scheme to the Southport Highways and Works Sub-Committee and the Town Planning Committee, for the development of the site for houses, the scheme being approved. In January and February 1933 the entire contents of the plant house and the museum were sold off in a series of auctions, the items offered including many items of local interest and curiosity (among them an Egyptian mummy!)

The development never materialised however, and the site remained vacant and increasingly derelict for a further four years until its purchase by the Southport Corporation in 1936. The gardens were restored, regrettably with the loss of the great glasshouse, and the north part of the site was made into a playing field under the King George V Playing Fields scheme. At the re-opening in 1937 trees were planted in the grounds by various dignitaries to commemorate the coronation of King George VI.

A new museum was established in the former Museum building, opening in 1939 but largely starting afresh, as the previous miscellaneous collection of exhibits had been sold. There was an emerging realisation of the didactic possibilities of museums (as opposed to the previous 'cabinet of curiosities' mentality) and the new museum was set up specifically with the aim of providing educational opportunities for school visits. The Corporation had had several attempts to form a civic museum from the 1890s onwards and had in store a growing collection of material starting with an important collection of geological specimens. There was a move to establish a War Museum post 1918 but this foundered and so the acquisition of the Churchtown building was highly appropriate and timely.

The museum now has a strong local collection illustrating the development of the area and its industries and activities.

The new look Botanic gardens incorporated more facilities for the whole family. There was a children's playground, a bowling green and a pet's corner. These are now supplemented by tennis courts and an aviary, a bandstand and a large café.

### **3.4 Meols Hall**

The manor of North Meols was held in the post-Conquest period by the de Lacy family, Constables of Chester. In about 1200 Sir Roger de Lacy granted the bulk of the manor to Robert de Coudray in whose family it was held until 1350 when the last survivor Katharine de Coudray married Robert de Aughton. In 1550 the estate was divided between the last two daughters of the de Aughtons, Elizabeth marrying into the local Bold family, the other daughter Anne marrying Barneby Kitchen of Pilling. In 1618 Anne's daughter married Hugh Hesketh, thus beginning the long link with that family.

No remains of the house from the early period have been identified but the rather fractured history of the occupants from these years suggest that there may not have been any substantial construction. The links with the wealthier Hesketh family, albeit a cadet line brought more money for house building and there is evidence of work from various periods in the C17th., particularly the later years.

In 1733 Roger Hesketh (the second) married Margaret Fleetwood of Rossall, north of Blackpool and the family home was transferred to Rossall with Meols Hall becoming the home of the land agent. It became a farm and was greatly reduced in size.

In 1759 Roger's son married a Frances Bold, thus re-establishing the link with the other half of the manor. In 1824 their grandson Peter (later Sir Peter) Hesketh Fleetwood succeeded to the estate but by the early 1840s, bankrupted by a speculative port venture at Fleetwood, he had to sell most of the Lancashire estates. However his younger brother Charles, with help from family members was able to buy back Meols Hall and some of the surrounding land.

Following his death Sir Peter's widow moved to the south of England, but on her death she left the remains of the Rossall art collection to her great nephew, who on his demise in 1938 left the collection to the Hesketh family.

The re-occupation of the house by the Hesketh family brought a revived interest in improving the property. It was refaced in Accrington bricks in the 1890s, but these were replaced by old bricks in the 1920s. However the major improvements were carried out by architect owner Mr. Roger Fleetwood Hesketh in the early 1960s with extensions and remodelling in a very authoritative C18th style. One of the objects of this work was to house the inherited art collection and the eventual location of pictures was decided before any construction works began. The principal external alteration was to the east front facing the park in the style of the 1730s. It incorporated stone dressings from one of the Venetian architect Leoni's pavilions at Lathom which was demolished in 1960 and C18th bricks from Tulketh Hall, Preston which was lost in the same year.

The distinguished group of outbuildings to the south west of the hall contain a much altered C17th barn and a Palladian style shippon of 1951.

### **3.5 Historic Uses and their Influence**

It can be seen from the historical outline given that the form of the three zones is heavily influenced by their very different historical uses. It can be argued that the Botanical Gardens and Meols Hall areas have changed relatively little since their character was defined. In the first case it is the use as a pleasure gardens which still continues, in the second as a manorial house in a farmland, later a parkland setting.

Even in Churchtown where there is a much greater number of economic forces at play owing to the diversity of tenure, the basic grain of the settlement has changed by only a modest degree since the medieval period. The original street pattern has hardly altered and the individual cottage plots largely survive.

The C19th was arguably the first great period of change in such areas and there was indeed some development, not least the Botanic Gardens but within the village, change was relatively isolated and small scale. Much was to do with the improvement or reconstruction of individual properties and there was little aggregation of plots which is the precursor of large scale intrusion.

### **3.6 Archaeology**

The recorded underground archaeology of the area is not extensive. There are records relating to the discovery of dug-out canoes near to North Meols Hall and on the site of the Botanic Gardens which correlate with the records of the land to the east being a mere. Other archaeological sites relate to the Churchtown Mill – a windmill just south of the Conservation area, a watermill in the middle of Meols park and a village prison and pond near to the entrance to the Botanic Gardens.

Consultation of the Sites and Monument Record (now Historic Environment Record) for the area shows the majority of the entries relating to listed buildings. Within the limits of the two Conservation Areas there are 70 listed structures.

They are reported as dating mainly between 1600 and 1720, though precise dating of vernacular structures of this type is difficult on stylistic grounds. A detailed study of the houses, with an attempt to ascribe dates would be helpful. This may be a project for a local history group.

## 4.0 LANDSCAPE SETTING AND VISTAS



*Figure 6 Aerial view of Churchtown / North Meols Conservation areas  
(Aerial Photography 2005, copyright Sefton Council)*

### 4.1 Setting and relationship with surrounding area

As is the case with many Conservation Areas, the area covered by the Churchtown Conservation Area represents a good part of the historic core of the settlement in this area. Much of the building fabric and the street pattern therefore pre-dates that of the surrounding areas. The aerial photograph above shows the smaller scale and more intricate nature of the

development within Churchtown as opposed to the largely rectilinear and more uniform nature of the surrounding streets.

The aerial view shows that the North Meols Conservation Area is much greener in character, with fewer isolated significant buildings. The greenness provides a stronger link to the parkland and agricultural or horticultural areas to the east which have grown up on the drained mere.

To the north of the area (above the photograph) is the area of Marshside which has some remaining cottages and fishermen's dwelling but these are rather lost beneath the superimposed street grids. To the north of this again is open land consisting of low dunes and marshes adjoining the Ribble estuary.

To the south east is the much larger area of planned development, much of it Victorian and early C20th which are part of the suburban expansion of Southport itself.

#### **4.2 Character and relationship of spaces**

Again there is a strong difference in character of spaces between the two Conservation Areas. The North Meols Conservation Area is characterised largely by green spaces enclosed visually by trees or walls. The spaces themselves generally change little apart from the effects of changing seasons, though in the Botanic Gardens the horticultural influence is stronger, providing quite startling colours, and quite sudden changes as bedding is renewed. Meols Hall park and garden are much less changing. Indeed the idea of establishing continuity and apparent lack of change is a *raison d'être* of the English country house. The spaces within this Conservation Area are quite strongly defined, and such transition as there is happens largely in a calculated and designed way, with specific aesthetic intentions.

By contrast the layout of Churchtown Conservation Area is utilitarian in origin. The end result certainly has a positive visual character but by and large this was not any part of the original intention. Generally, streets developed from the lines of pathways or vehicle tracks linking early settlements or key geographical points (e.g. historic pilgrimage points, markets or river crossings). Individual house plots were either individually acquired or deliberately planned facing onto principal routes often for commercial reasons. The relatively lower value of the land behind these street frontages (in former times) is shown by the much less organised layouts, which appear to have appeared on an *ad hoc* basis.

Some of the rather apparently random nature of the Churchtown settlement arises from the fact that the early cottages were dotted around the open (common?) land on more favourable spots, and often with a south or south easterly aspect.

The Victorian development in Churchtown is much more ordered in character, the streets of houses creating more formalised compositions, being set in parallel rows. As, within the Conservation Area they are not too extensive, they add variety to the overall mix of development.

The key open spaces within the Churchtown area are the main streets themselves, the nodes or intersections (of which the most important is the node in front of the church) and the churchyard. The definition of these spaces is much less robust than in the North Meols area because of the less deliberate nature of the planning. The 'fixed' enclosure is provided by tree planting, the frontages of the buildings themselves and to a lesser extent by walls and gates.

### 4.3 Hierarchy of Routes

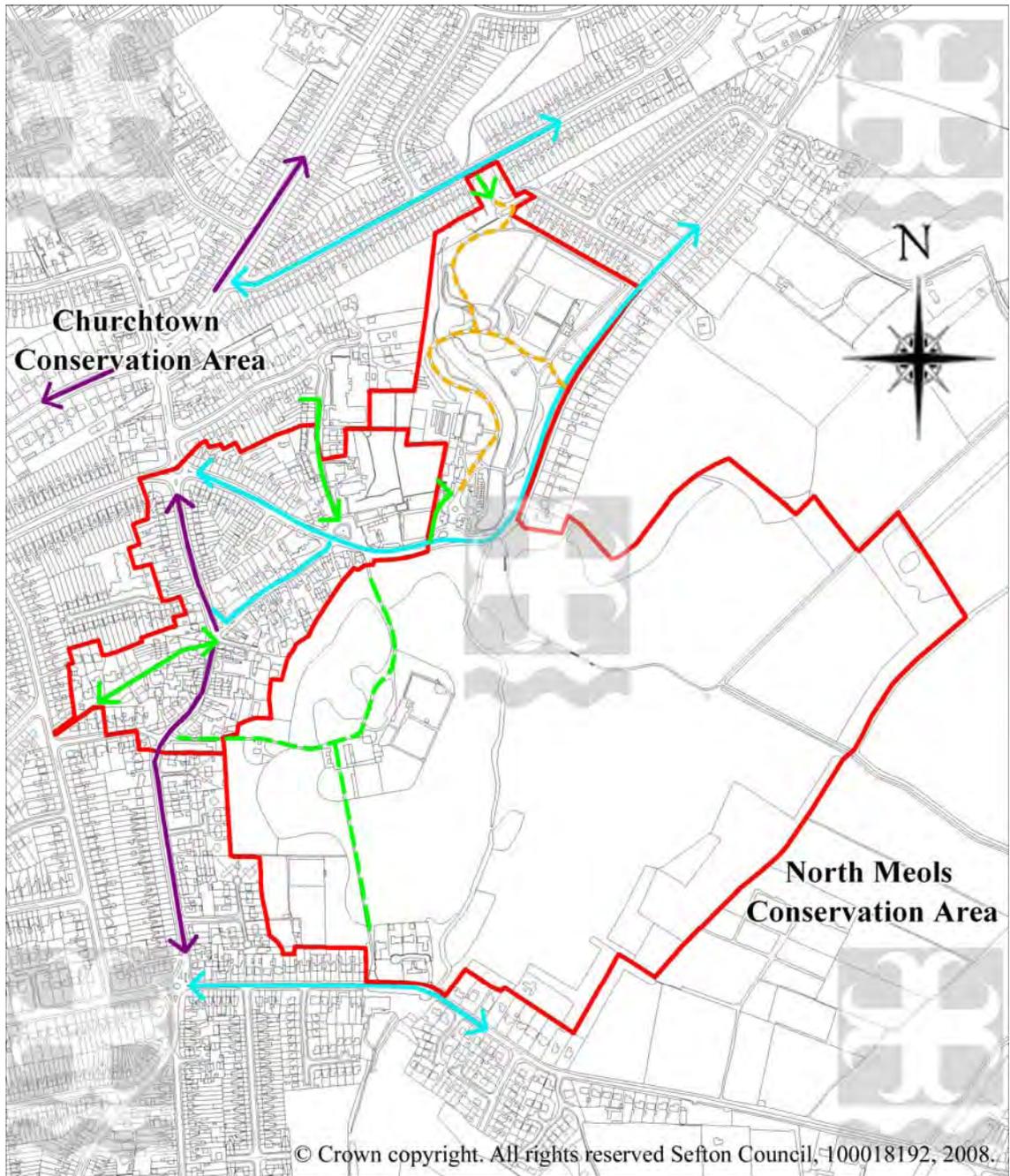


Figure 7 Hierarchy of traffic routes and footpaths  
Key

-  Primary route
-  Secondary route
-  Local route
-  Local (private)
-  Footpath

To the north, and just outside the Conservation Area is Cambridge Road which is the main A565 route from the centre of Southport north to Preston.

Parallel to this 'north-south' route is the A5267, an inland route which runs through the eastern fringes of Southport, bypassing the centre of the town. This route does however run through Churchtown just south of its connection with the A565. Both this route and the main route described above are designated Primary routes on Figure 7.

The secondary routes are mainly east-west links. As far as the Conservation Areas are concerned the key one is that which passes in front of the Church and to the east of the Botanic Gardens. This is two-way. There is a key one-way section of this route which passes down the original street of Churchtown now known as Botanic Road.

Within the Conservation Area there are a number of small lengths of road, classed as Local routes on Figure 7 which have no classification. They are primarily access routes, and those shown as a broken line are the private roads to Meols Hall.

There are a number of well used footpaths through the Botanic Gardens, but otherwise no paths of note through the Conservation Area.

#### **4.4 Views and vistas within the Conservation Area**

The views and vistas within the Botanic Gardens and Meols Hall landscapes are controlled and largely contained within the perimeter of these spaces and so these are treated separately below.

Within the Churchtown Conservation Area the views are best experienced and described from a number of specific points, mainly the node points. There is little of the dynamic or changing view within the public realm as streets are more or less straight and dominated by incident rather than development. There are a number of side openings off Botanic Road, which give variety and interest, as does the variety of buildings which are found along it. Views and nodes are shown on the map following.

The principal exception to this is the changing nature of the journey from the church green, north east past the Botanic Gardens to Bankfield Lane, and particularly vice versa. The bend in the road at the entrance to Meols Hall screens off Botanic Road, and then further along, the bend at the foot of the Serpentine Lake screens off the transition to Bankfield Lane. Thus there is an interesting sequence of conceal/reveal which adds character to the journey. The incidental short views through the gates into Meols Hall Park, and into the Botanic Gardens enhance the experience.

Views of the church are important to the area, and in some places help to identify location. The key views of the church are from in and around the church green.

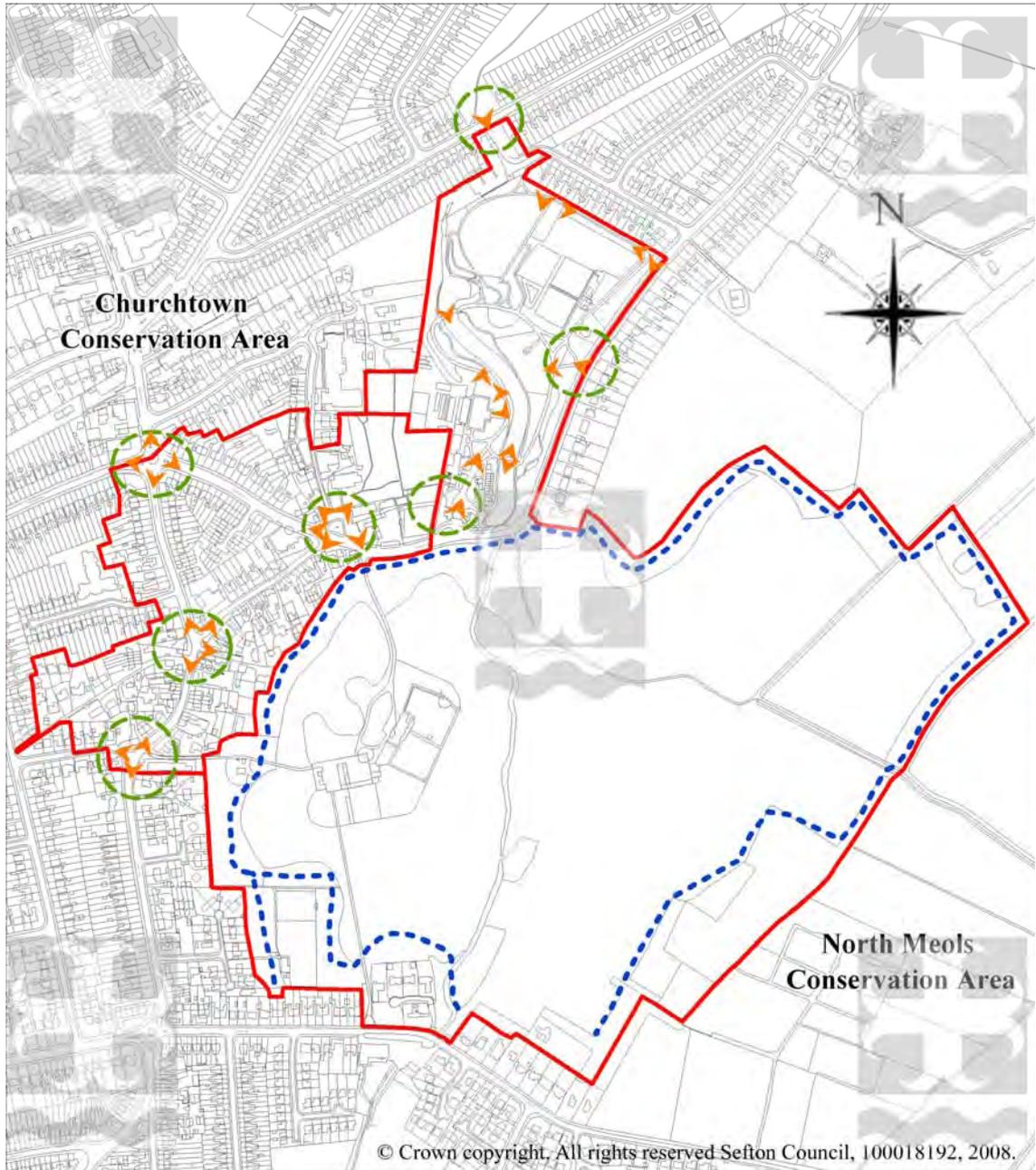
There is a series of identifiable node points from which the key 'static' views are obtained. The principal node point is the church green, the others are the junction of Cambridge Road and Manor Road, the junction of Manor Road and Botanic Road, the junction of Botanic Road and Mill Lane. Secondary nodes occur at the entrance to the Botanic Gardens off Balmoral Drive, the Bankfield Lane entrance to the Botanic Gardens and the main entrance to the Botanic Gardens.

#### **4.5 Views out of the Conservation Area**

Views out of the Conservation Areas are rather limited, being largely just the extension of the various streets and lanes. The Meols Hall part of the area is completely isolated visually from the rest of the area but it does have views to the east across the open land, as described in that section.

Figure 8 'Nodes, viewpoints and visual barriers' summarises the information on views in Churchtown and the key visual barriers.

The node points, circled in green are locations from which there are views in a number of directions along converging streets. The small orange arrows point along the lines of main views, but it must be realised that there are many other shorter scale views, which add to the overall character of the area.. The heavy dotted blue line shows the rather dense tree screen which partly encloses the Botanic Gardens, and almost completely encloses Meols Hall from public view.



Churchtown and North Meols Conservation Areas  
Viewpoints, Nodes and Barriers

-  Node Points
-  Views
-  Tree screen

Figure 8. Viewpoints, Nodes and Visual Barriers

#### 4.6 Botanic Gardens

The views within the Botanic Gardens tend to be quite limited. The main open areas are those in front of the museum and café and the playing areas to the north. Elsewhere views are along pathways with occasional glimpses between sections of the gardens. Within the highly structured layout of the gardens there is probably little that needs to be done to change this arrangement. With the maturing of trees and shrubs it is important not to allow the views to close down much if any further than they are at present.



*Open areas and winding paths within the Botanic Gardens.*

#### 4.7 Meols Hall

The views within Meols Hall park are in strong contrast to those within the Churchtown Conservation Area and the Botanic Gardens. They are generally long views of a predominantly green landscape. By design they seem to shut out most of the urban, suburban and general rural landscape round about.



*Views north and east across Meols Hall parkland*

The only buildings visible are Meols Hall and its outbuildings, and indeed from the main approach to the Hall, and from the east facing garden the service buildings are generally not visible.

There is a solid tree screen within a few hundred metres on the north, west and south, but to the east the tree screen is much more distant, and apart from a limited view to the north east, the only distant view is the far outline of the Pennines to the east.



*Views looking west and east along the main drive of Meols Hall*

Apart from this overall screening and a limited amount of screening from the main entrance gates there is no significant design relating to approaches as is often found in larger schemes.



*Views of Meols Hall from the park.*

#### **4.8 Other green spaces and planting**

##### *Churchyard*

This space surrounds the church on the east and south sides, with an additional burial ground extension to the north. The churchyard would benefit from a greater sense of enclosure. Such enclosure as exists is provided by surrounding buildings – the school, the Botanic Gardens glasshouses and the rear of the museum and the north wall of the church institute. The space is a largely undifferentiated area of gravestones, with a few larger monuments (e.g. to the Fleetwood Hesketh family). The more recent stones are standing in the conventional manner, but the C17th and C18th stones are laid flat with only small spaces.



*Views of the church and churchyard.*

The normal maintenance problems of churchyards are all here, with the additional question of maintaining the area with the flat stones. In the spaces between there is grass which needs mowing and there is a risk in this process of damaging the stones. Methods which eliminate this risk should be supported.

Two adjacent spaces are the small Garden of Remembrance and the bowling green. Attempts to improve the unique identities of these spaces and provide greater visual separation should be encouraged. Any such measures should predominantly rely on soft landscaping.

### *Church Green*



*The Church Green*

There is a small green island in the middle of the square which consists of grass with a number of mature trees surrounding the obelisk. The feature is of sufficient area and volume to make a significant contribution to the scene. It is compromised however when vehicles are parked adjacent (parking is possible on all four sides). The use of the green area for quite large temporary signs also detracts from its value. It will be desirable to consider succession tree planting for the future.

### *Civic Society Garden*

This is a small public garden on the north side of Cambridge Road near to the Village Square and is maintained by North Meols Civic Society. It provides a quiet retreat area off the main streets. The planting is fairly full, particularly in the first section, as for a cottage garden. In the second section grass predominates with various island planting beds. Various wooden benches have been placed in the garden, mostly in sunny spots.



*Views of the North Meols Civic Society garden*

## 5.0 TOWNSCAPE AND FOCAL BUILDINGS

### 5.1 General characteristics

As mentioned it is not easy to form generalised statements describing the overall character of these two Conservation Areas. Four distinct character zones have been identified for the purposes of this study, but further sub-division is possible. The four areas are:

- within Churchtown Conservation Area
  - Churchtown medieval village
  - The Victorian housing development, mainly to the west
  
- within North Meols Conservation Area
  - The Botanic Gardens
  - North Meols Hall park

The characteristics of the structures and spaces within the North Meols Conservation Area, i.e. in the Botanic Gardens and Park are not readily susceptible to description under the headings of Townscape and so these are covered less fully in this section.

### 5.2 Townscape

#### *Grain*

The grain of the settlement areas within the Churchtown Conservation Area is of three distinct forms. Within the older part of the village there is a more or less continuous band of development along the main street frontages on Botanic Road (Figure 9a), but a somewhat irregular pattern of development in the back-land and Churchgate areas (Figure 9b).



Figure 9a Sketch showing tight, close set grain on Botanic Road street frontages

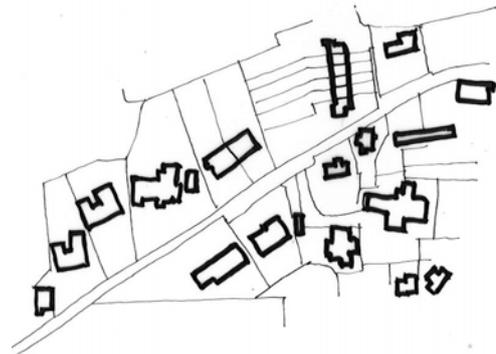
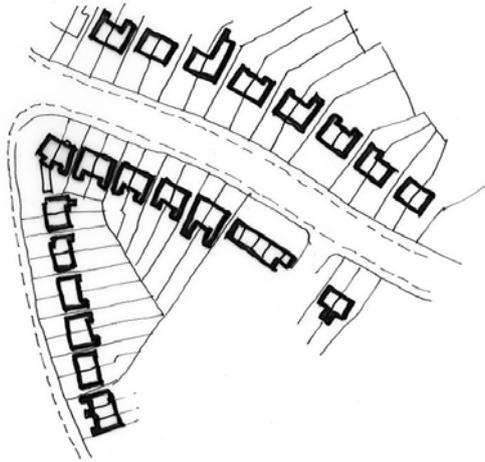


Figure 9b Sketch showing more open and random grain of development in Churchgate area

Within the later area of Victorian development to the north and west of the historic core the pattern or grain of the development is highly regularised. Plots are deep and narrow and houses are generally in pairs (Figure 10).



*Figure 10 Sketch showing grain on Cambridge Road and Manor Road*

### *Scale*

In the village, building scale is a consequence of pressures on development and the period at which it took place. The main areas of tightly grained, small-scale development are on Botanic Road, where the pressures to have a commercial frontage were greatest. Elsewhere, as in Churchgate and in some of the backland developments there was less pressure and so plots are irregular and somewhat random in pattern.

In Cambridge Road and Manor Road we see the imposed order of late Victorian town development where plot sizes are equal and layouts are formalised. Improved construction techniques and the requirements for greater internal space caused houses to be taller. In general whilst the earlier village dwellings are one, or (a rather dwarf) two storeys in height, the Victorian houses are of two storeys with attics.

Within each of the two distinct areas the scale tends to be consistent but there are, in various locations quite sudden contrasts. At various points because of late survivals the small-scale village houses remain amongst their taller Victorian neighbours. In other points, as at the south end of Manor Road and also Botanic Road larger scale Victorian buildings occur within the zone of the small village houses.

It is preferable if the predominant 'rule' relating to scale is followed within each of the areas, as further variations in height and volume tend to dilute the characteristics of the areas.

### *Rhythm*

The only discernible regular rhythm is in the plots of Cambridge Road and Manor Road where the development consists of symmetrical pairs of houses, set back from the road with a wall and pair of gateposts to each house and a tree planted at the edge of the pavement line.



*Photograph showing rhythm of properties on Cambridge Road.*

By contrast, in Botanic Road such rhythm as exists is much less defined. House plots are narrow, houses abut the pavement and openings occur at irregular intervals. On the west side of the street plots are wider and with more variety in depth of frontage.

#### *Repetition and Diversity*

As with *scale* and *rhythm*, there are some areas where there is a great deal of *repetition* of features, particularly in the west side of the Churchtown area in the Victorian development. There is great value in maintaining the rhythm and repetition, which are diluted by alteration works such as opening up front drives, replacement windows and rendered facades.

The eastern part of the village, including the Square and Botanic Road is marked by greater *diversity*, but within limits.

- Building heights are generally lower but more varied;
- there is more variety of window and door size and type and size of other openings;
- the building line is more varied;
- there is more variety of building uses;
- there are a number of shop fronts, with their own characteristics;
- there is a greater variety of materials used.

It is important to control the limits in order to avoid the transition from interesting diversity on a theme, to visual chaos. The predominance of white wall surfaces with black painted joinery tends to bring some unity.

5.3 Focal buildings and features

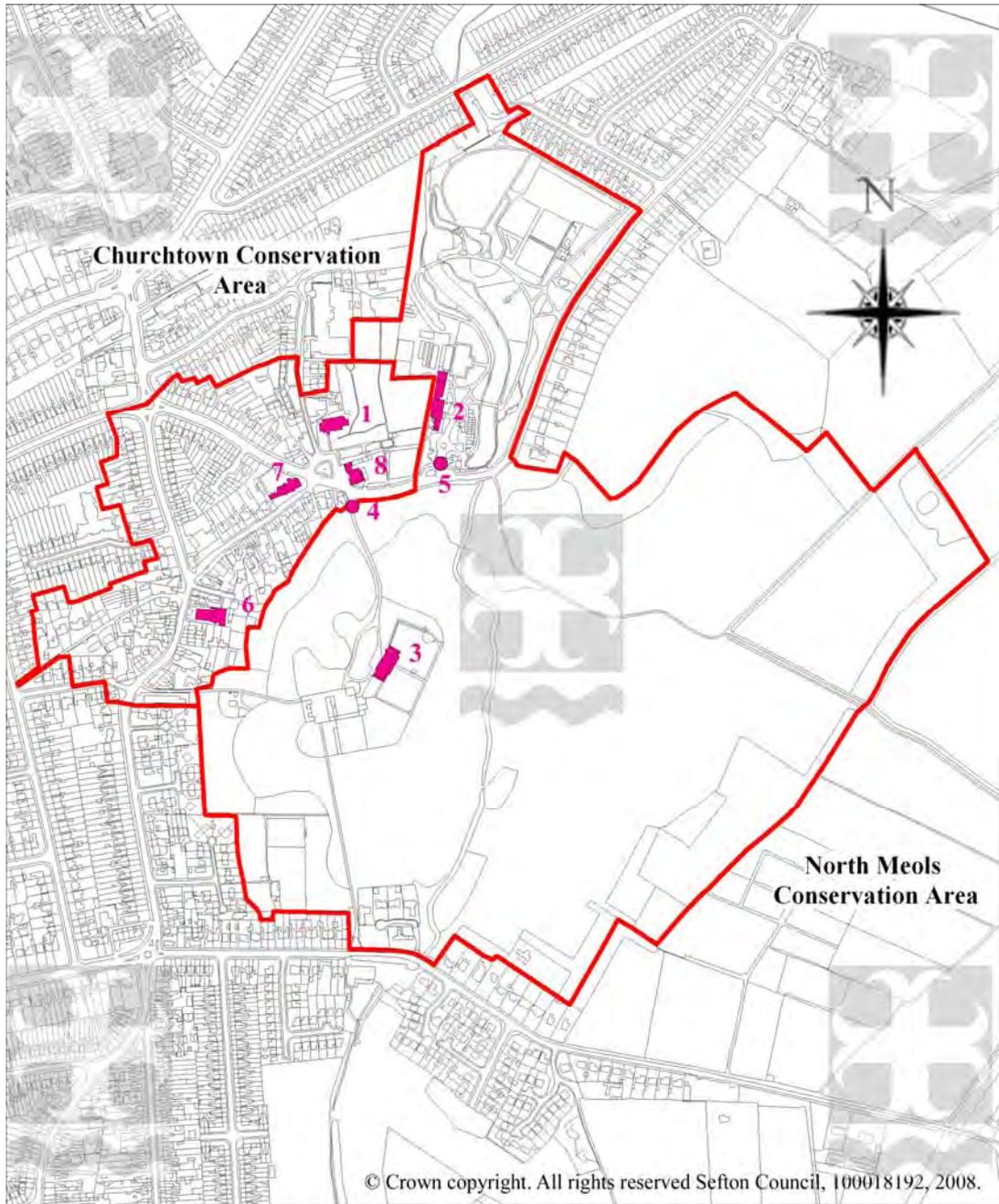


Figure 11 Map showing focal buildings (numbers refer to following text)

### *1 Church and churchyard*



*The church and lychgate*

The church is constructed of sandstone with a slate roof. Little remains of the medieval church, the majority being from the 1730s with alterations in the 1800s and a new chancel and porch from 1908. The west tower and short spire are the dominant features and the focus of a number of views, and provide a local landmark. This reflects the relatively low profile of the cottages and landscape features at the time of their construction.

### *2 Museum and adjoining buildings*



*The museum (left) and adjoining cafeteria*

The building was built in 1876 to designs by Thomas Mellor of Southport. It consists of a two connected blocks on an almost north-south orientation with a glazed conservatory added to the east side of the main building. The buildings are of brick with slate roofs, the museum having a band of roof glazing on the east and west sides.

The main museum building is of north and south wings with a central block projecting to the east and west, the east side being the principal. It can be seen that the side wings had east facing verandas, which have been removed leaving them somewhat domestic in character. The central block breaks forward slightly and is gabled with a cast iron first floor balcony on columns. The main block has a mansard roof incorporating the glazed band and is hipped at the north and south ends, which combined with fish scale slating give it a French appearance.

To the north is what is now the cafeteria in brick under a half hipped slate roof with a 5 bay arcaded façade to the east facing onto the park. The six piers separating the arcade extend through the roof as square piers capped with ball finials.

The conservatory on the east side of the museum building is linked to it but almost free standing. The appearance, particularly the simplicity and rather heavy nature of the glazing bars suggest that this is in part or whole a reconstruction.

### *3 Meols Hall*



*Meols Hall (East front)*

The illustration shows the multi-period nature of the property. The darker brick area is late C17th material, with the main body of the house, to the north of the C18th and C20th periods, whilst to the south, on the left is the mid C20th service wing. The whole composition with its wing walls and small terminating summer houses is very calm and satisfying. It is interesting that such a large house has very little cultivated garden. Any formal allees or parterres in front of the house have been taken away to give a clean and simple appearance. The house is the focal point of most of the views within the parkland.

### *4 Main entrance to Meols Hall*



*The entrance to Meols Hall*

This group forms the focus of the view east from the church green. There is a pair of C18th piers with wrought iron gates, which together with the cottages on the south side make a good group. Trees inside the gate screen off any further views' which is no doubt a deliberate scheme but is somewhat frustrating to the curious.

### *5 Main entrance to Botanic Gardens*



*The main entrance to the Botanic Gardens*

This is a formal set piece to the north side of Botanic Road. There is a semicircular approach leading off the road, with curved fencing and hedges leading into a symmetrical pair of brick built lodges and a former lock up known locally as ‘the pound’.

The Lodges are ‘L’ shaped with one gable facing the road and each has a single storey round ended projecting wing to join up with the gates. The gates themselves are a five bay composition with a wide central bay having inward opening double gates, flanked by fixed panels, and in the outer bays inward opening pedestrian gates. The car parking rather compromises this set-piece design.

The lock up replaced an earlier building on the site. The present structure originally opened onto Botanic Road and has been used as a tram and bus shelter. It has since been altered to open inwards and serves the boating concession.

### *6 Congregational church*



*Congregational church*

This building is not in a prominent location being alongside but set back from the southern length of Botanic Road. However it draws attention by its scale, which is about twice the height of the surrounding buildings and also its colour, a strong terracotta red with yellowish stone dressings.

*7 Bold Arms*



*The Bold Arms*

This building forms a significant component of the view south west from the church green being in the space between Botanic Road and Cambridge Road.

*8 Hesketh Arms*



*The Hesketh Arms*

This building which faces the viewer in the photograph above closes off the view as you travel north on Botanic Road to the church green and also along Cambridge Road. It has a good Georgian frontage but the detail is somewhat obscured by climbers, planting boxes, signage etc.

## 5.4 Streetscape Features

### *Lighting pillars*



### *Lighting pillars in Church Square*

The illustration shows the problem very clearly. There are two regimes of street lighting, an earlier system of old short columns, and the more recent system using replica columns of unnecessary height. The shorter lighting columns were introduced by Col. Roger Hesketh in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century and are now listed structures. Any new lighting should relate to these.

### *Bollards*



### *Bollards*

Here we have a series of deliberately low-key unpainted timber bollards used to prevent vehicles encroaching on the pavements. The end result is commendable and should be supported as good practice.

### *Road signage*



### *Intrusive road signage*

The road signs generally are low key and non intrusive, the exceptions are the arrows at the south end of Bankfield Lane and this one at the south end of Manor Road which stand up in front of the thatched cottages. Elsewhere unpainted galvanised steel posts have been used to support road signs and these are intrusive on the street scene and should not be repeated.

*The stocks*



Medieval frame with modern reproduction bars for holding the victim's limbs in place. There is clearly space for two guilty parties.

Security may be required but the spiky fence does not enhance their setting.

*Obelisk*



The obelisk stands in the centre of the green island in front of the church. It is an elegantly simple stone structure with a copper sun at the head. As the picture shows it is rather lost amongst the large trees. It is apparent that it has been reconstructed and the new mortar is light in tone compared with the stone. The structure came from Lathom Hall near Burscough and was re-erected on the green in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Sandstone cleaning is not a normal recommendation but cleaning and repointing of the obelisk if necessary would greatly improve its appearance and sense of 'presence'. Removal of the noticeboard and substitution of large stones for the bollards and chains would help simplify the appearance of the green.

*Signage generally*



*Signage in Manor Road*

This is an example of a case where a well-mannered ordinary building has been severely compromised by the application of unnecessarily large signs. They relate to ‘special offers’ and so it is not clear if they have received any formal approval.

The adjacent property, again adorned with large signs, but of a better quality of lettering. Co-ordination of the signs into one would be adequate. The attachment of signs to boundary walls should not be encouraged.



*Shop signage in Botanic Road*

Good well mannered fascia signage and modestly proportioned hanging signs making an attractive composition.

This area is a good example of the general use of ‘black and white’ for external painting and shop signage. This colour choice has the effect of helping to give visual unity to the area.

#### *Paviours*



*Clay paviours*

Clay paviours are widely used in the village and in the path leading to the Botanic Gardens.

Many are from Buckley in North Wales. They are an attractive brownish purple colour with a distinctive makers crest and should be preserved and maintained. Opportunities to provide new matching paviours, in areas which are currently tarmac or modern slabs, should be taken where possible. This would help unify the street scene.

## 6.0 ARCHITECTURE, MATERIALS AND DETAILS

### 6.1 Prominent Styles

It is only in the village itself where there are types of building which are repeated sufficiently to become characteristic of the area. In the Botanic Gardens and in the Meols Hall areas there is almost no repetition of types as the structures are all individual and purpose designed. At Meols Hall, there is the Hall itself, a former tithe barn, a low range of stables, a Palladian style shippen and other incidental buildings. In the Botanic Gardens there is the museum, the fernery, commercial style glasshouses, the bowling pavilion, lodges etc. Most of the structures are of good quality of their type and few are detrimental to the character.

In Churchtown by contrast there are a number of 'typical' styles. In order of numbers of examples they probably rank as follows:

1. Victorian semi-detached houses
2. Single storey cottages, with or without thatched roofs
3. Brick terraced cottages
4. Terraced shops

These types are considered in further detail below:

#### *Victorian semi-detached houses*



(a)

*Examples of Victorian semi-detached houses*



(b)

Most of the semi-detached houses belong to the widely adopted pattern which has one main room and the entrance hall on the principal front. What is characteristic of the area generally is that there is a roof gable facing the road over the main room. In grander houses this is expressed as a wing which breaks forward, in the lesser houses it is merely a gable feature added to the longitudinal roof. Within this pattern there are, as illustrated above two main subdivisions – those with main rooms adjacent to the party wall (a), and those with entrance halls adjacent to the party wall (b). With type a there is a centralised chimney for the two properties as opposed to gable end stacks for type b

Buildings are rarely flat fronted – the higher the status of the house, the more modulation, which is provided by break-front gables, ground floor bay windows, recessed porches and more or less heavily detailed window and door surrounds.

The replacement window and door industry has fared well here as elsewhere, to such an extent that there are almost no memories of the original details. In almost every case these changes represent a loss of character. Typical issues are – ‘flat’ surrounds and frames with no visual interest, large flat glass windows, uniform flat plastic barge boards instead of moulded and decorated styles.

Although the light in this area is often strong and clear, and hence accommodates stronger colours, the persistence of bright white is still detrimental to the character. A number of the houses have subdued greens, creams and reds which harmonise with the architectural style rather than dominating it.

*Single storey cottages, with or without thatched roofs*



*Examples of single storey cottages*

These are characterised by low front walls, low overall height (although some have steeper pitched roofs which takes them to the equivalent of two storeys), long low appearance as a number are terraced, white walls with black painted joinery and a fairly low window to wall ratio. Many are parallel to the street, being at the back of the pavement line or slightly set back, but in Churchgate and behind Botanic Road there are a number set at apparently random angles.

Although of a reasonably consistent appearance the dates range from C17 to C19. Some have been changed in the Victorian period, roofs being changed from the almost universal use of thatch to slate, windows being enlarged and changed to casement or vertical sashes.

*Brick terraced cottages*



*Brick terraced cottages in Botanic Road and Manor Road*

Terraces are either rows of distinct brick double fronted houses built in a row abutting each other, as the above left example, or purpose built terraces of rather smaller houses, as in the right example. They are of a modest two storey height, and most are built at the back of the pavement line, but with some slightly set back behind front gardens. Roofs are generally slated, front walls are either plain or painted brick or in some cases rendered over brick. The issues which affect these houses are the same as for the larger Victorian houses in that windows and doors are replaced, often with unsympathetic modern types, which do not reflect the subtlety of the original designs.

*Terraced shops*



*Terraces of shops on either side Botanic Road*

Some of the shops, as in the right hand example are converted cottages (although it is not always clear); others as towards the right of the left hand photograph are purpose built. As in the right hand there is real consistency of form – brick fronts, moderate pitch slate roofs, casement or sash upper windows and, on the right side of Botanic Road a very consistent height of shop front. Although the roof line and the shop fronts provide a strong linear pattern, the irregular rhythm of the first floor windows prevents monotony.

The shops in the left hand picture make a less satisfactory composition. The orientation of the first floor windows in ‘Bonhams’ has been changed by to a more horizontal one. To the right the signboard of ‘Checkers of Churchtown’ is excessively deep and spreads across two buildings of quite different character, thus providing an unhelpful horizontal emphasis and compromising the individual buildings’ characteristics. The phone shop in the centre has overmuch signage positioned haphazardly and unattractively.

## **6.2 Materials and typical details**

There is a wide variety of architectural styles, building types and building ages within the Conservation Areas. This has resulted in a fairly wide palette of materials and details used. It is only possible therefore to seek that replacement or reconstruction be true to its type, or even to the individual building rather than true to the Conservation Areas as a whole. The one exception to this might be street pavings and furniture which are addressed separately.

The four building types characterised in Section 6.1 have their own palettes of materials and it seems most helpful to discuss them under the same type headings.

*Materials used in association with Victorian semi-detached houses*



*Roofs* are generally of natural Welsh slate with dark blue clay ridges and lead valleys. Chimneys are brick with a number of corbel courses at the head and a variety of pots.

*Bargeboards* are a mixture of timber and plastic replacement. Originals, as here were painted timber with decorative finials and pendants.

*Walls* are of a dark red smooth brick of even colour with crisp fine joints and a tinted mortar to give a very uniform appearance.

*Lintels, arches and cills* are painted stone or render.

*Windows* now are largely plastic replacements. The owner of this house has taken a more sympathetic approach with more subtly proportioned divisions and use of some coloured glass. Simple two or four pane sashes are appropriate.

*Materials used in association with single storey cottages, with or without thatched roofs*



*Chimneys* are square on plan with simple corbels at the roof line and at the head, often with clay pots. In many cases the stacks are rendered and painted white.

*Roofs* are straw or reed thatched with a fairly simple ridge detail. Other cottages are roofed with slate at a low pitch with blue clay ridges.

*Walls* are of rendered timber and daub or brick painted white.



*Projecting porches* are common either below the main roof line, or just projecting into it.

Most older *windows* are of the Yorkshire sliding sash type, some simple Victorian casements, and others have been renewed with plastic glazing, some with rather fussy bow designs.

*Materials used in association with brick terraced cottages*



Stacks are unrendered brick with simple corbels and in some cases early chimney pots survive.

Roofs are Welsh slate at a low pitch, and, in this example hipped.

Walls tend to be of a brownish red brick with cream to white mortars. In the example shown the left hand three of the five have been rendered over with a textured or a smooth white render. The result is that the terrace barely reads as such.

Windows are generally vertically oriented casements or sashes with stone lintels and cills. Doors were originally simple four panelled but have been replaced in some cases with more fancy modern counterparts.

*Materials used in association with terraced shops*



The basic palette of materials is as for the terraced cottages.

Shop fascias tend to be placed rather low, giving modest scale shop fronts. The fascias tend to be shallow – about 400mm with small projecting cornice and elaborated ends. Lettering tends to be of simple classical designs in black on white or white on black.

In most cases shop windows are large areas of sheet glass with vertical subdivisions. A number have subdivisions into small panes but these tend to be more recent developments.

*Use of black and white paint*



A feature typical of the older part of the village is the predominant use of white walls with black painted joinery, or other combinations of black and white, with white dominant. The use of bright white is not unusual in areas near the sea where it works well in the strong light. However it is unusual to find such a persistent use of black rather than other strong colours for the contrast. Good black paint only became widely available in the Victorian period and so this scheme probably ties in with the development of the village and Botanic Gardens as a place of resort for visitors. A similar use of black and white is found in other areas which were popular quaint resorts in the Victorian era. A further development of this is the use of gold lettering on black for signwriting. It has a very traditional look and is a tradition worth maintaining. This illustration shows an elegantly simple use of black and white with simple brass fittings.

*Yorkshire sash windows*



There is a small number of examples of this type of window within the village. This particular example obviously had external shutters also as the pintles remain. When they occur on listed buildings they are protected but elsewhere they are at risk of replacement, and hence a loss of distinctiveness.

*Stone gate piers*



The majority of the houses in Cambridge Road and Manor Road appear to have had stone gate piers with some sort of carved decoration. Large stones of this kind would have been sourced well away from the district and so represent a considerable investment in the character of the houses. They are under threat with changes to entrances and the formation of open parking areas.

*Thatched roofs*



The thatch used presently is of straw or reed, originally however they would have been straw or marram grass. The thatch has a remarkably bold and simple appearance, with a lack of detail such as gutters. It is a strong contributor to the character of the area.

## 7.0 CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

### 7.1 Character Zones

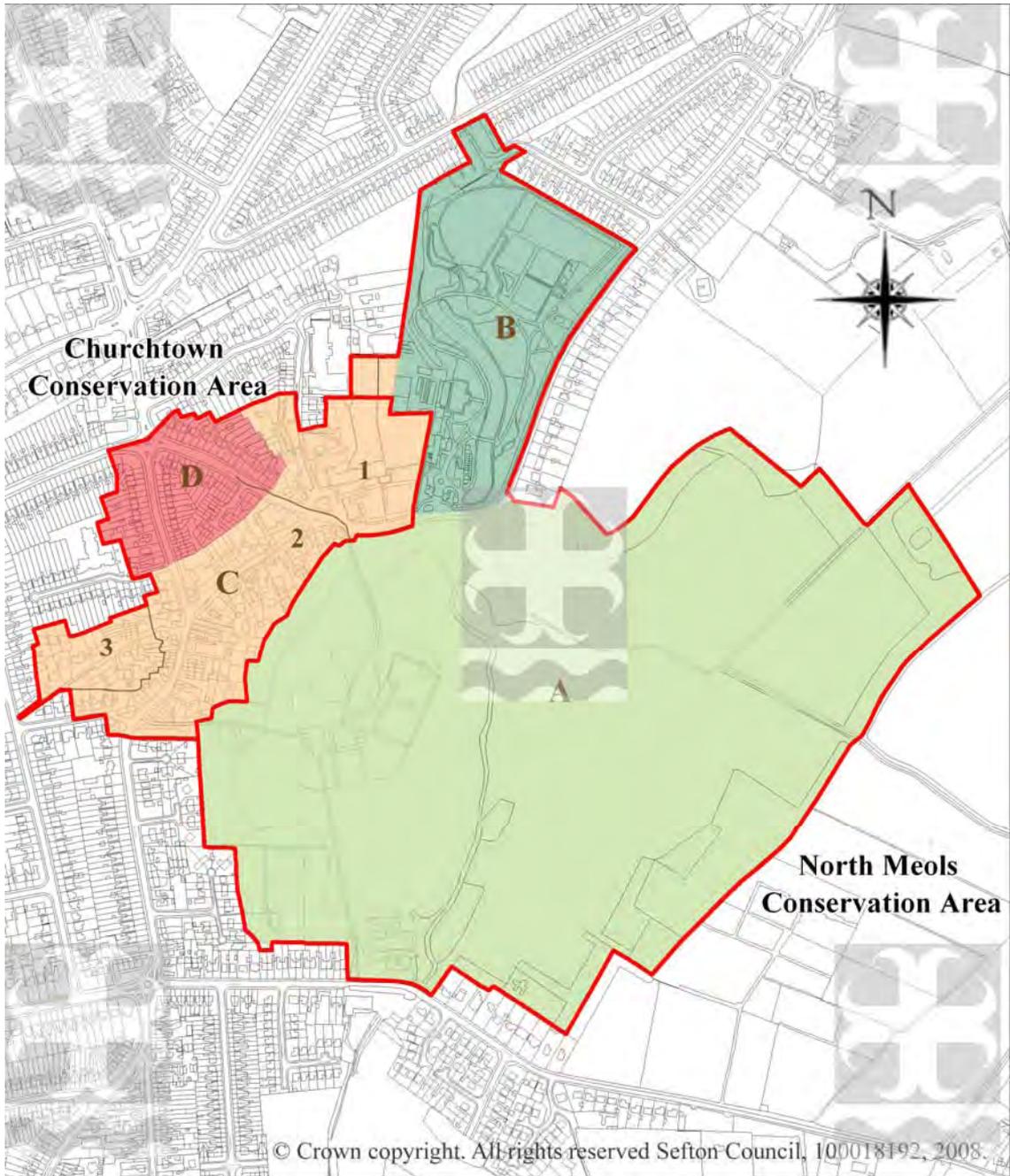


Figure 12 Plan showing character zones

A		Parkland	C		Medieval village with subzones 1, 2 and 3
B		Botanic Gardens	D		Victorian houses

The two Conservation Areas taken together give rise to four principal distinct character zones as shown on Figure 12 above. There are a number of sub-zones identified within area C which are discussed in detail within that section.

The solid boundary fences and enclosures around Meols Hall park and around parts of the Botanic Gardens result in these zones being visually almost completely separated and so they can be considered almost in isolation

### 7.1.1 Parkland (A on Fig 12 plan)

#### *The Hall*



The Hall itself is in a simple well mannered but not ostentatious Georgian style, with a warm coloured brick and stone dressings. With its slightly irregular composition, and remains of earlier structures it shows its development and hence it appears more connected to its site than if a pristine set piece. With its wing walls, terminating summer houses and low ha-ha the east terrace forms a pleasing space which could benefit from some simple topiary or further simple geometrical incident.

#### *The farm buildings*



Although varying in scale according to their original uses, the buildings are generally of a soft mellow brick with simple stone dressings and gentle pitched roofs. The continuity of materials, and particularly of paving which is largely sandstone blocks provides an overall unified impression, with a sense of quiet and order. The courtyards and buildings are kept immaculately clean which is extremely beneficial. There is remarkably little visual disturbance or clutter.

### *The Park*



The palette of materials in the park area is limited almost exclusively to even mown grass and clusters of deciduous trees. The water course shown is well below ground level and is largely invisible from a distance. The simple bridge is almost the only constructed feature visible beyond the buildings complex. As for the buildings themselves the emphasis is on visual simplicity. The driveways are of gravel topped tarmac without kerbs and are gently curving so are relatively unobtrusive.

### **7.1.2 Botanic Gardens (B on Fig 12plan)**

#### *Main buildings, attractions and formal gardens*



*The Museum and cafe*

Most visitors enter through the main gates and visit the museum, cafés and shops before dispersing into the rest of the Gardens. The approach from Bankfield Lane is across a brick paved approach, through iron gates between a pair of lodge cottages and then to a node point with a central planted island. From this node, the main approach continues straight ahead but there are two options to the right leading to the boating lake and to the aviary, and a turn left to a small toilet building.

At high level the sense of enclosure to this area is given by the museum and its annexe and the fernery on the west side, and by trees on the east side separating the approach from the lake. When first laid out the focal point at the end of the approach road was the grand conservatory building, but this was demolished in 1936 leaving the north end somewhat unresolved. A new focal point to lead the eye in would be desirable.

At low level this zone is extremely busy and confusing. There are island beds, steps, low walls, low fences, exotic and colourful planting, a plethora of signs and seats. In addition on a busy summer day there is added the visual confusion of the land train, the gardeners trucks and a great deal of human activity. The scene is vibrant and flourishing but there is confusion from visual and aural sources. Some replanning and clarification of the space would give it a greater dignity and would set off the the imposing group of buildings.



*The main entrance and aviaries*

Other visual detractors are the confusion of parking in the entrance approach and the rather negative effect of the aviary structure. The set piece design of the two lodges with gates between and the small boat house on the east side is compromised by the presence of parking outside.

The aviaries consist of a row of low timber buildings divided into houses for small groups of birds, each with its external flight space enclosed with a double layer of heavy green netting. The comparative 'solidity' of the green netting makes for a somewhat corridor like appearance.

*Open spaces – grass, water and recreation areas*



*The garden walks with formal planting, and (r) The Serpentine Lake*

The main focus points for activity in the Gardens away from the main buildings are the series of well defined open spaces.

Threading through the gardens is the Serpentine Lake, with its small stream extension to the north. Apart from the mid-point where there are cross views it is really only possible to view the lake from the ends and from the two intermediate bridges, thus its visual and landscape qualities remain significant.

Other distinct areas are the bandstand lawn, bowling greens, the two playing pitches and the childrens play area. These are subtly defined by raised banks and tree screens, and in the case of the bowling green by a dense evergreen screen hedge. The glimpses in and out between the areas and through the trees are particularly appealing, particularly that across from the bandstand over the lake to the museum building.

The hard paved surfaces are largely tarmac with neat edgings of low stone walls, kerbs or neatly trimmed grass. The tarmac has a rather dead quality but is very functional and does not dominate because of the surrounding landscape quality.

*Tree screen areas*



*Tree Screen, and (r) the grotto*

Apart from the area around the main buildings the boundary of the Gardens is marked by a band of tree planting. On the north side it is a double row of beeches with a path between; to the east there is again a double row of trees atop a bank (a former sea enclosure work) which gives rise to the street name. There is then an intermittent inner band of trees giving good visual and climatic protection from the east. The breadth of the planting zones means that there is little view into or out of the gardens. However from the circuit pathway there are good views from the shade of the trees to the open recreation areas within.

Within the tree zone on the east side, south of the Bankfield Lane entrance is a small serpentine path through a grotto, which is well maintained but slightly lacking in effect because of the lack of depth of material to give a visual barrier above.

*North car park*



The north car park is approached from Balmoral Drive. The entrance is relatively unmarked and it would help if this was clearer, however it does double as an entrance to residential streets so any formal enclosure at the edge of the street is not realistic. Within the park the entrance to the Gardens is signalled by an avenue of young trees and an entrance panel. As an overall policy it would be desirable to move car parking away from the south entrance and so some enhancement of the Balmoral Drive approach and parking would be desirable.

**7.1.3 Medieval village (C on Fig 12 plan)**

Whereas the park, Botanic Gardens and Victorian housing areas have a high degree of consistency from which it is possible to develop a concise statement of character, there is much less homogeneity within the medieval village. As indicated at the beginning of this section the Character Area identified as the medieval village can be further subdivided into three sub-zones. The distinction between these zones is not as clearly defined as between the main zones – hence the dotted line. Where one sub-zone ends and another begins is in some cases arguable as characteristics tend to flow one into another and so these lines should not be taken as rigid.

*Area '1 subzone' -The church and churchyard, Sally's Lane and the Church square.(Fig 12)*

This zone comprises a fairly loose association of spaces focussed around the church square. The eastern half is occupied by the church and churchyard and the bowling green to the rear of Hesketh Arms. To the north west is the more linear development along St Cuthbert's Road, the rest being occupied by the spaces around the church green.

The churchyard and its extension with the memorial garden and bowling green alongside form a series of linked, largely open spaces. The type of uses are highly prescriptive on their layouts and it is unlikely that there would be much pressure for change. The bowling green forms a 'green link' to the Botanic Gardens which it would be helpful to maintain.

The churchyard is dominated by the church itself and this visual link should not be compromised.



(L – R) Bowling green, memorial garden and burial ground

St Cuthberts Road is a narrow street leading off the church square fronted by cottages of single, or low two-storey height. The older properties are at right angles to road, and there is a series of elderly person’s dwellings laid out in a crescent facing the road.



Bungalows, and (r) cottage in St Cuthberts Road

The key area within this sub-zone is the church square, which is the focal point of Churchtown itself. It is an irregular square cut through by one of the main traffic routes, with a small village green, all surrounded by a varied range of buildings.

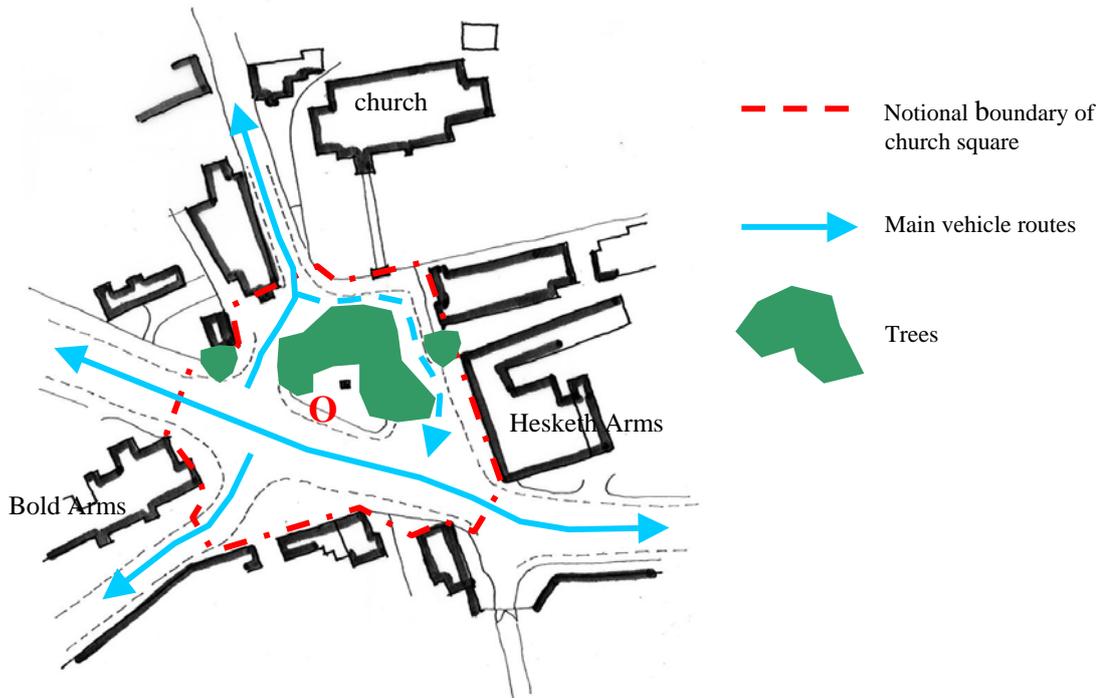


Figure 13 Sketch plan of Church Square

In the diagram above the key facades fronting the Church Square and the ones which contribute to the sense of enclosure of the space are shown with a red dotted line. In order to maintain the sense of place it is important that this line is maintained.

There are a variety of surfaces in the church square including grass in the centre around the trees. Around this there are various traditional surfaces of setts and pavements which make a pleasing combination. At the entrance to the south part of Botanic Road there are extended areas of pavements, but the two areas of more traditional materials are separated by tarmac surface. It may be beneficial to the unity of the market place to carry the small unit paving right across, maintaining only the grass in the centre.

Parts of this area, particularly in front of the Hesketh Arms are used for parking. The parking is detrimental to the attractiveness of the space.

The obelisk (marked **O** in fig 13) is the centrepiece of the square but it is somewhat ignored because it is somewhat lost among the signs, the barrier chain, and is away from the main pedestrian area.



*Views of Church Square*

The chief characteristic of the area is therefore the comparatively large open space, somewhat rectilinear in nature and with relatively large, well differentiated building structures. The space is demarcated by the key buildings and by stone or brick walls about 1.2m high. The third element, the vertical dimension is provided by the trees which also help to define the spaces, although being fairly mature are open at eye level.

Building materials are varied – the church is of natural stone, the church hall and its extensions are brick or render, and the Hesketh Arms and Bold Arms are of white painted render.

The scale is therefore of rather simple and bold forms, well separated by open spaces and with mature tree growth.

*Area '2' –The main village street - Botanic Road (Fig 12).*



*Irregular height houses in Botanic Road*

On Botanic Road the majority of the properties are built up to the rear of the pavement line with no front garden or apron area. They are largely of two storeys, but on the north west side vary considerably in overall height as shown in the above photographs. These pictures also show the frequent use of white walls with black painted window frames.



*Main range of shops on Botanic Road*

At the northern end of Botanic Road, just next to the church square there is a much greater consistency of height of shops. The eaves line is almost continuous and the height of the shop fronts themselves is consistent, with fascias abutting each other.

In the areas illustrated by the previous two sets of photographs there is a strong consistency, however on the side of the road opposite to the above picture the character is much less strong, having been weakened by some 20thC development set back from the pavement line.

*Area '3' –Churchgate (Fig 12)*

The character in these streets is very different. Individual buildings are much smaller scale and more irregular in layout. The basic unit in many cases is the small pre-Victorian artisan cottage of one or one and a half storeys. Along the street fronts the cottages often abut the back of the pavement line, but in backland areas as in Churchgate, presumably where commercial pressures were lower there is a more irregular layout. The development process must have been piecemeal, with plots taken up at different times and buildings built, rebuilt and altered at many different periods.



*Irregular development and cottage in Churchgate*



#### **7.1.4 Victorian houses along Manor Road and Cambridge Road (D on plan)**



*Victorian housing*



The regularity of the development in these areas, the consistency in road width and building line, the consistent style of the buildings all suggest that it was developed within a short period and as part of a single development. Originally there would have been a high degree of consistency within the building groups but with changes of ownership and status there has been inevitable change in the detail.

This mode of setting out can be rather daunting in extensive streets, but in the short roads within Churchtown there are sufficient nodes to break up any sense of sameness. Outside the area on Preston New Road and Balmoral Road the developments are relentless and the sense of place is lost.

The basic pattern is set by a constant building line well back from the street allowing front gardens, with close set houses of a similar red brick and even height. Properties were originally fronted by a low wall with gates set between stone piers. There was a regular pattern of tree planting particularly on Cambridge Road.

The building facades are relieved by having a slight modulation forward for the principal rooms, and these often have gable ends facing the street. Main ground floor windows are often in bays of rectangular or polygonal pattern. Windows tend to be of large panes and now are almost all white, although originally there would have been more use of darker colours – red, brown, green etc.

7.2 Contribution of unlisted buildings and structures

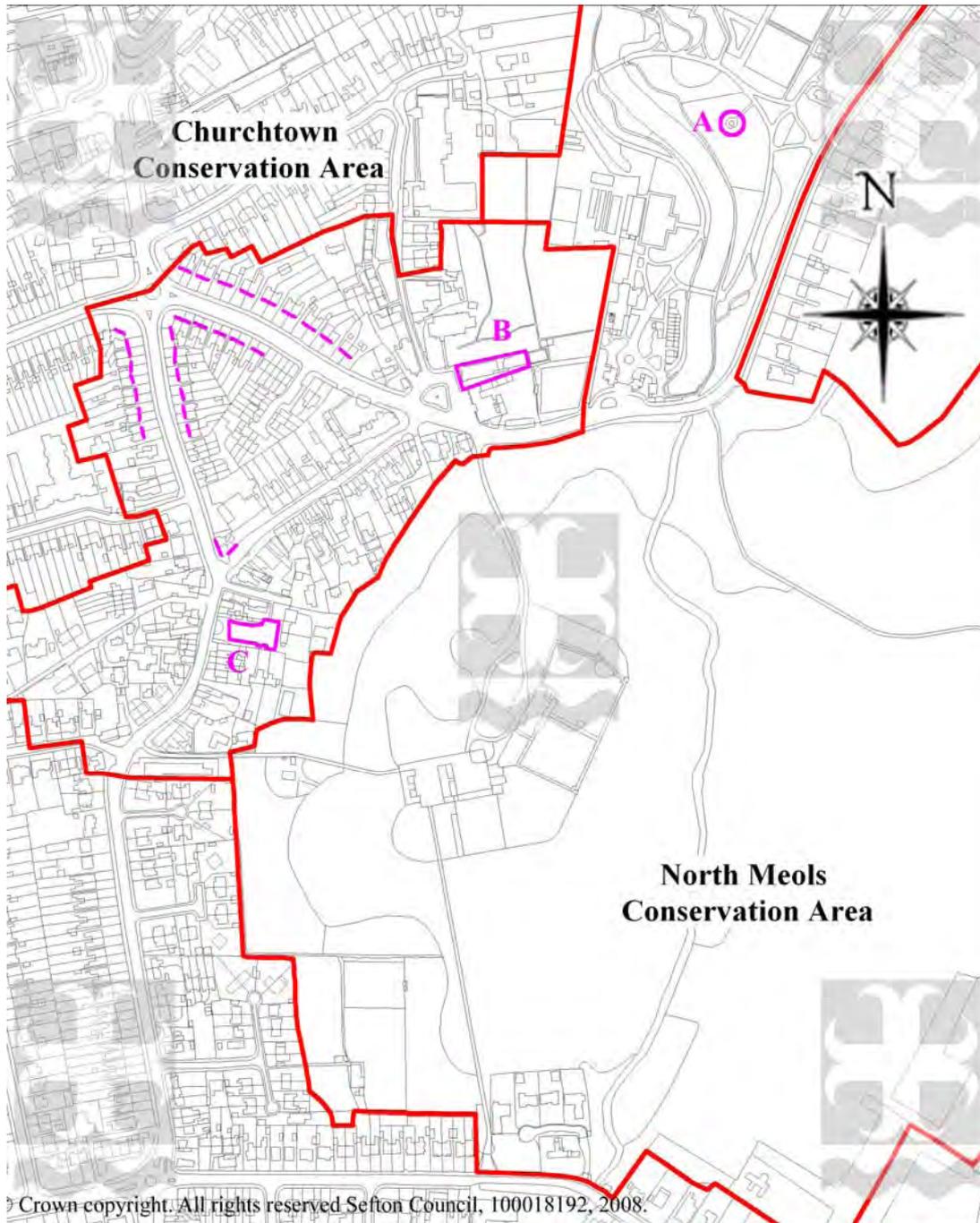


Figure 14 Plan showing key unlisted structures and frontages, letters refer to following text.

<b>Key</b>		<b>Key unlisted buildings</b>
		<b>Important unlisted frontages</b>

There are a number of unlisted buildings which make a key contribution to the character of the Conservation Area and they are shown (A – C) on the map above. They are three key structures which contribute as individual buildings.

Also, by virtue of the strength of their frontages there are a number of Victorian and older houses which contribute positively.

The four unlisted structures which make a key contribution to the character of the area are:

*1 The former shelter*



The former shelter, is literally a focal point within the northern part of the Botanic Gardens. It is a Victorian Gothic structure comparable in quality with the other structures in the park. Originally it was built as a shelter with benches encircling it inside, and outside with glazed windows providing shelter. Restoration of the structure to its original appearance would be beneficial.

*2 The church hall*



The building is a simple brick structure with stone dressings. Unfortunately the front elevation has been compromised by the addition of two small wings. However it has a positive effect in closing off the corner of the church square, and given a little sensitive restoration could make a real contribution to this important open space.

*3 The Congregational church*



As with the previous two buildings the church bears little relation to the local vernacular. Its scale is very different from the majority of the domestic or retail properties in the immediate vicinity

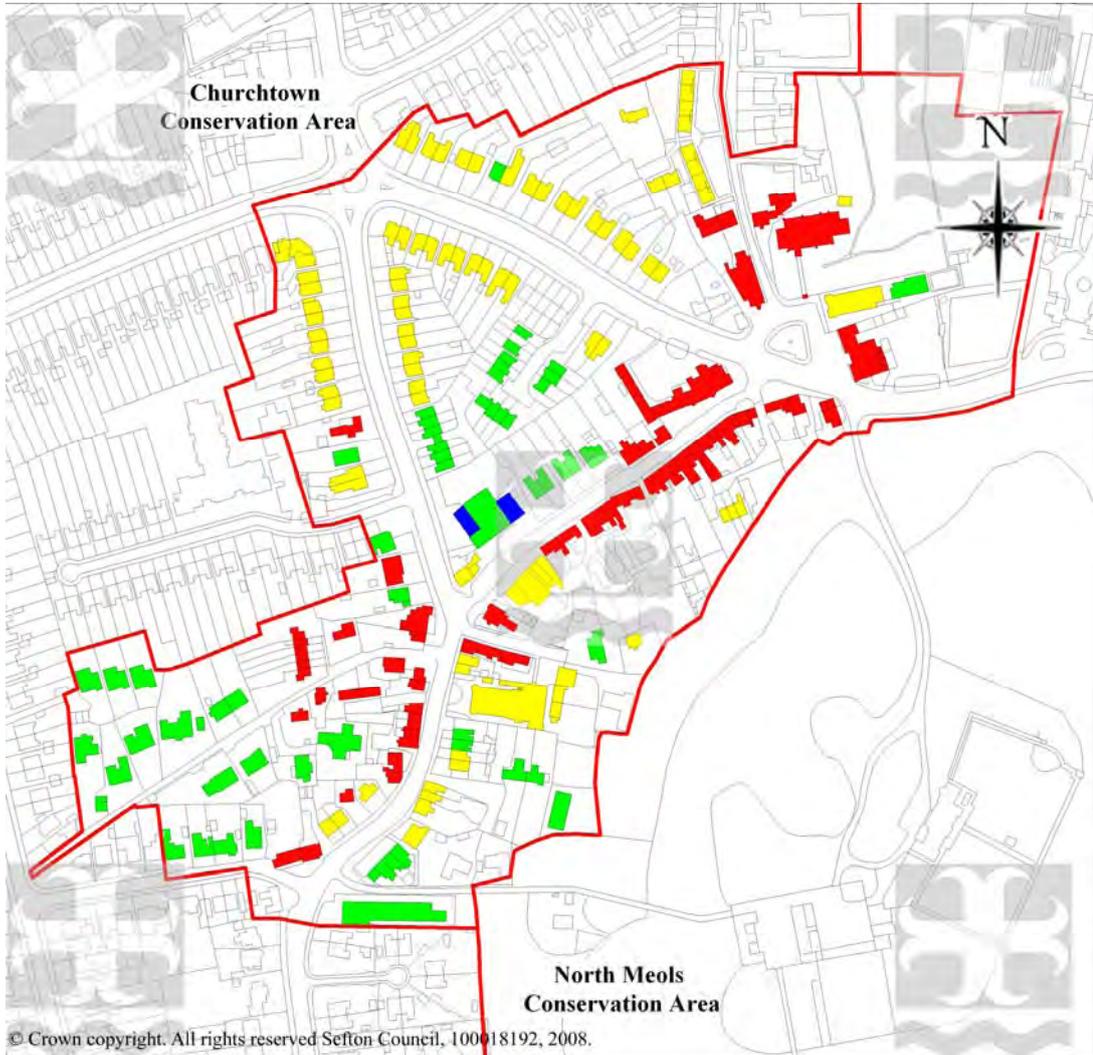
*4 The Bowling Pavilion*



This structure was built in 1938 by the Southport Corporation and is therefore a later addition to the park. Though built by the corporation, its design is attributed to Peter Fleetwood Hesketh who was influenced by the designs of architect Decimus Burton. It is an attractive building incorporating Greek and Gothic architectural influences.

**7.3 Contribution of buildings to the character of the area**

Much of the character of the area depends on the individual buildings, as well as trees, street furniture etc. In order to show the contribution of the buildings to this overall character they are plotted on Figure 15 below. The study shows the Churchtown area only, as the buildings within the North Meols area are all of significance.



*Figure 15 Plan showing contributions of buildings in Churchtown Conservation Area*

- Buildings critical to the character of the area
- Buildings that contribute to the character of the area
- Buildings of neutral interest
- Buildings that are detrimental to the character of the area

#### **7.4 Special Interest of the Area**

There is no single special interest of the area because of its divided character. However within the different character areas there are particular characteristics which contribute particularly to their sense of identity:

***Meols Hall and Park:***

- Very limited palette of materials
- Sense of visual calm
- Good level of maintenance
- Lack of intrusive signage or service installations

***Botanic Gardens:***

- Separation into distinct character areas
- Opportunity for journey and exploration on foot and water
- Exciting and colourful planting
- Sense of fun and activity
- Sense of going back to an earlier period

***Churchtown – Church, Market Square, Botanic Road and Churchgate***

- Sense of a historic village in a largely suburban area
- Smallness of scale
- Picturesque thatch buildings
- Use of black and white colours
- Special pavings

***Churchtown – Manor Road and Cambridge Road:***

- Uniformity of Victorian villas
- Tree lined
- Colourful gardens
- Gateposts

## **8.0 NEGATIVE FACTORS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCEMENT**

### **8.1 Overview**

As before, this section is subdivided according to the three main character areas within the Conservation Areas.

#### *Meols Hall*

So long as change can be incorporated within the envelope of existing structures, with external facilitating features (e.g. car parking) kept to a level of minimum impact then it may not be problematic.

#### *Botanic Gardens*

The Gardens are extremely well used by the local population and visitors and obviously they form a significant local and regional asset. They may be a victim of their success in that parts of the site show wear and tear and parts show less attractive environments (e.g. the water quality in the lake). There are questions also about the condition of some of the buildings – the museum principally and the level of investment.

#### *Churchtown*

The general standard of the Conservation Area is high, and there is an obvious level of commitment to maintenance of properties and open areas, to making the area visually appealing and to general tidiness. Detrimental factors to the visual and environmental character are related to the areas of traffic, signage, street furniture and traffic.

### **8.2 Negative factors**

For ease of discussion, and possibly to assist in devising solutions the ‘negatives’ are grouped into a number of main themes or areas.

#### **8.2.1 *Traffic flow***

The flow of traffic through the three principal streets of the area – Botanic Road, Cambridge Road and Manor Road – has an impact on the environment of these streets and on the life of the community generally. At the times of the study the flow of the traffic was constant and much of the traffic *appeared* to be ‘through’ traffic rather than that which has its origin or destination in the local area. This is of course difficult to ascertain other than through a formal survey. A detailed traffic analysis would be required to test these observations.

The central section of Botanic Road is the narrowest of the principal streets and contains the majority of the retail concerns. The buildings are generally of modest scale and there is considerable visual interest in the buildings, the shopfronts and the shop contents.

There is a one-way (north to south) traffic scheme in operation, with unrestricted parking on the east side of the street. The parked and passing traffic at current levels does detract from the qualities of the area.

### 8.2.2 *Traffic signage*

A consequence of the traffic status of these roads (A and B category) is that lighting levels, direction and hazard signage are to Highway Engineering set standards. This results in the use of disproportionately large direction signs (e.g. the Ormskirk sign on the Botanic Road / Mill Road roundabout), and obtrusive warning signs (e.g. the hazard arrows at the south end of Bankfield Lane). Removal, or downgrading of these signs would have a positive impact.

### 8.2.3 *Visitor parking*

Churchtown and the Botanic Gardens have a significant attraction for visitors and the village is promoted as a visitor destination. However for visitors arriving by car, parking arrangements are not clear. It would be helpful to provide some designated parking within easy reach of the Church Square which is the focus of the village. There is parking available for patrons of the Hesketh Arms and the Bold Arms, but both areas are fairly free during the day. Informal parking occurs around the 'green' area in front of the church which is visually quite jarring, and similarly in front of the Botanic Gardens south entrance.

Designating of certain areas for parking and restricting others, for example the environs of the Church Square, would improve the environmental and visual standard of the area to a significant degree.

There is designated parking at the north entrance of the Botanic Gardens off Balmoral Road but this appears under used and it would be helpful to improve signage to this, and even raise the status of this entrance into the park to relieve the pressure on the south entrance.

### 8.2.4 *Residential parking*

In some areas, Manor Road and Cambridge Road particularly, there is a significant move gradually to open up the entrances to the front gardens of the Victorian villas to enable them to be used as parking areas.

This is particularly convenient for residents, but it does compromise the appearance of the houses further. There is the loss of the front boundary wall, the loss of rhythm in the position of the gatepiers and in some places the complete loss of distinctive stone gate piers.

The garden provides a setting and a foil for the front elevation of the house and is traditionally grassed with flower borders. With the change to parking, the impression of greenness is reduced.

The restrictive solution to this is to bring the change of use of the front garden under development control.

### 8.2.5 *Improvements to the Botanic Gardens*

The overall attractiveness of the gardens which arises from the clever landscaping and the high quality horticultural display tends to draw attention away from the fact there are some problems with the certain aspects of the gardens. These affect structures and some of the landscape features.

A number of the main Victorian buildings are in need of serious attention to bring them

up to a good visual and structural standard. First among these is the Museum itself which has roof problems and would benefit from some external reinstatement of detail. This is tied into the need to improve the level of display and the ethos of the museum. It was re-established in the 1930s with a more didactic intent but although some areas are refreshed and reflect contemporary interests and museology techniques, others are distinctly tired.

Similarly visual improvements could be made to the glasshouse café and the refreshment building.

The fernery has significant historical interest. The roof has been refurbished and there are proposals to improve the interior.

Refurbishment of the lodges and gates and the area immediately outside, with the removal of cars would improve the main approach to the gardens from the south.

Within the gardens generally improvements could be made to the signage and maps so that visitors can understand the layout of the grounds more clearly. Other visual detractors are the aviaries, which with their functional layout and heavy mesh cages do not contribute to the wider scene and, arguably are not the most beneficial habitats for their occupants, and the lake.

Whilst the landscape design and setting of the lake are sophisticated, the quality of the water and some of its margins are somewhat unsavoury. The solution to this may be largely through change in management including the reduction in numbers of waterfowl and gulls, the removal of dead leaves, reduction of disturbance by boats, measures to oxygenate the water.

An improved kiosk at the south end of the lake would enhance that area, which is one of the few areas of the gardens which are visible from outside the perimeter. The provision of a stronger visual attraction in this location, for example a fountain, would be beneficial.

#### 8.2.6 *Changes to Victorian villas and brick terraces*

The visual satisfaction provided by these urban forms depends on a high degree of design consistency. The lack of constraint in the face of the current tendency towards individual expression gives rise to an unacceptable diversity of appearance. The unrestrained changing of windows, doors, external joinery, the application of external render and the large scale changes to front gardens has eroded the distinctiveness of the villas and terraces in the Churchtown area. For example the rendering over and change of windows to the brick terrace in lower Botanic Road has destroyed the unity of character. In Manor Road and Cambridge Road, there are very few original doors or windows, or even reasonable copies.

The wholesale use of white paint or white plastic does not suit the character of these properties. Against the strong red brick it produces a heavy contrast in tone and draws attention to itself to a disproportionate degree. The medium greens used at the garden shop on the corner in general harmonise more satisfactorily.

The rhythm of the houses at street level is dependent on the sequence of garden walls and gate piers. As more and more openings are widened and gate piers moved or removed, the pattern is broken and thus the particular sense of place is lost. Many of the gate piers are of stone, and some with the name of the house incised. Such details contribute to the distinctiveness and should not be lost.

It is therefore recommended that an Article 4 Direction Order be applied to these properties.

#### 8.2.7 *Lamp standards*

Outside the Conservation Area the standards are fairly standard utilitarian street lights with low pressure sodium fittings. Within the Conservation Area these have been replaced with a more traditional form, although taller than any Victorian precedent. They have a small scroll detail and circular lamps with clear glass lamp housings and circular cowls over. In the Botanic Road area the original shorter cast iron standards remain, but also the reproduction type described above. To have a dual set of lights adds to visual clutter and means a degree of over-lighting of the area, whereas a more subdued level is probably appropriate. Whereas the tall lamps are just about in scale with the Victorian villas, they are much higher than the lower cottages and seem to dominate the scene unnecessarily. Removal of the tall lamps and reliance on the original standards would be an improvement.

#### 8.2.8 *Signage*

This is generally modest and not too obtrusive – but nevertheless needs to be carefully controlled so that it does not dominate. An exception is the property towards the south end of Manor Road which seems to have an excess of commercial signs. The use of black and white signage with some gold lettering is seen to be characteristic and this should be encouraged. Guidance notes on signage is desirable.

#### 8.2.9 *Paved surfaces*

The older part of Churchtown and the area around the church itself have good distinctive paved surfaces – stone setts in squares and banded, and clay paviers from north east Wales. These are particularly attractive and should be retained, and the areas extended if possible. Areas where tarmac could be replaced with setts and tiles are St Cuthbert's Road, the remainder of the Church Square, and the middle section of Botanic Road from Bold Arms down to the junction with Manor Road. This combined with an 'Access only' traffic scheme and a review of other street furniture could provide a greatly enriched environment in this street. It may be worth considering also changing the paving in Churchgate, which is of a narrow and winding character, and with low traffic impact. A landscape improvement scheme for the Square involving paving, lighting, parking controls etc. would be desirable.

#### 8.2.10 *Timber fencing*

The fencing on both sides of Botanic Road, but particularly the Meols Hall side just north of the Hesketh Arms detracts somewhat from the visual scene. Its replacement with robust railings, with, if necessary supplemental planting for screening would be a worthwhile improvement and would add to the status of this more formal part of the Conservation Area.

#### 8.2.11 *Post and chain fencing*

Around the entrance to Meols Hall and around the green area of the Church Square there is low post and chain fencing. The square section posts are painted white and the catenary chains are black. Their key function is (presumably) to dissuade people from parking on the grass. It would be preferable if the same outcomes could be achieved in a less visually 'busy' manner. A series of large rectilinear stones set in the ground at the edge of the grass would probably achieve the same result and be much less obvious.

8.2.12 *Visual clutter*

Old photographs of the area show a scene which is much more simple visually. Buildings have relatively simple unadorned frontages, pavings are largely clear and there are few posts or signs to be seen. Maybe this scene is unrealistic these days but there is now an impression of excessive busy-ness in the street scene, which begs to be reduced. Most of the contributors to this sense of busy-ness have been referred to- signage, bollards, road signs, streetlights.

8.2.13 *Use of appropriate finishes on buildings*

In various locations non-traditional finishes have been used, particularly on joinery. The Hesketh Arms has dark stained wood doors and joinery details – not a traditional finish. In these locations paint would have been used exclusively or, in the case of oak – the only real hardwood used externally in Britain it was either linseed oiled or left to weather naturally. The traditional cottages would have been limewashed in softer shades of white. The bright chemical white which now prevails is a recent invention. Printed guidance on the use of traditional paints and finishes would be desirable.

8.2.14 *Tree management and replacement planting*

In parts of the Conservation Areas, trees form a significant component of the scene. In Cambridge Road they form an avenue, in the square they form a strong visual incident giving shade and a sense of place. In the Botanic Gardens they separate the elements of the design and as individuals form strong design components. In the Meols Hall area they are used to contain the view and for screening. In all cases the need for management and succession planting needs to be considered.

There is limited opportunity for additional planting in public realms spaces, although tree planting could be encouraged in some of the larger gardens. However should the opportunity arise, sensitive tree planting may be beneficial within the churchyard to improve the quality of the space.

## **9.0 RECOMMENDED AMENDMENTS TO CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARIES**

### **9.1 Current Designated Boundaries**

The existing Conservation Area boundaries have been set in a succession of designations as described in section 1 of this report. Both Churchtown and North Meols Conservation Areas started with a core area which has then been extended outwards.

The North Meols Conservation Area originally extended as far as the stream known as the Pool which runs through the park. However from the house and from the entrance area this stream has no visual presence or significance and so it was felt desirable to extend the area to the limits of the near views, which is the curtilage planting of the park.

There is no need to suggest any changes to this as the status and condition of the area remains constant and, protected in this way there seems to be no pressing need for any alteration.

The Botanic Gardens was designated at the same time as the first part of Meols Hall park and, again there seems little reason to change the main boundary lines.

The Churchtown village area was the first Conservation Area to be designated in this area in 1973 and incorporated the village square, the church and churchyard and the length of Botanic Road as far as the beginning of Mill Road and including part of Churchgate. The boundaries of the area were, on the north west and south sides not particularly easy to define – the definition partly being made by visual barriers and partly by plot boundaries and in some cases both.

In 1989 additions were made to the Conservation Area in four locations, the major one being the inclusion of part of Cambridge Road up to the roundabout and Manor Road nearby. Small extensions were made to the ‘corners’ of the area in three locations to rationalise, to include additional historic structures, and in the south to protect both sides of the lane to Meols Hall.

### **9.2 Amendments**

Following this review and assessment of the two Conservation Areas it is proposed that there be one additional included within the Churchtown Conservation Area.

#### **Mill Lane**

Proceeding south down Mill Lane from the south end of Botanic Road it comes as quite a surprise to discover a further substantial row of single storey white cottages on the left and further substantial Victorian villas on the right, all of similar character and quality to those within the main body of the Conservation Area. On the east side of the Lane the continuity of the historic structures is broken by some late C20 houses, which are not proposed for inclusion. Many of the single storey cottages are listed and of a character similar to those in the main body of the Conservation Area.

It is recommended that there is sufficient strength of character within this street, and sufficient consistency with the main part of the Conservation Area to make it a worthwhile extension. The fact that this area, not designated as a Conservation Area is so close to a similar area which is protected raises questions with residents and visitors.

The south boundary would be formed by the north side of the road known as Moss Lane.

On the opposite side the boundary should extend as far as 13 Mill Lane. The exact definition of the boundary in this area needs careful consideration on site. The east and west boundaries would be formed by the rear boundaries of the properties which immediately abut Mill Lane.

This southerly extension would provide a worthwhile reinforcement of the character and a more considered and definite approach to the core of the area.

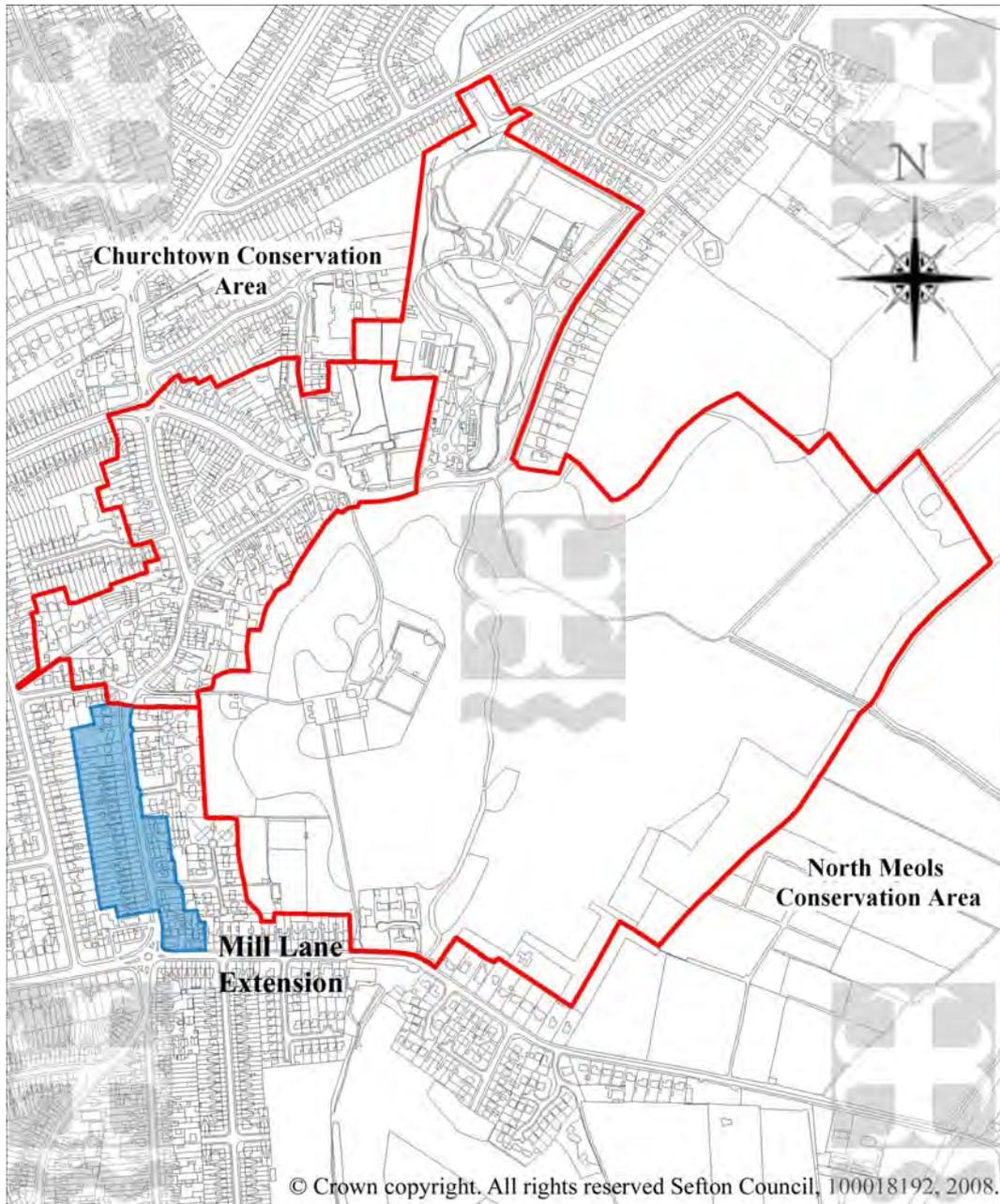
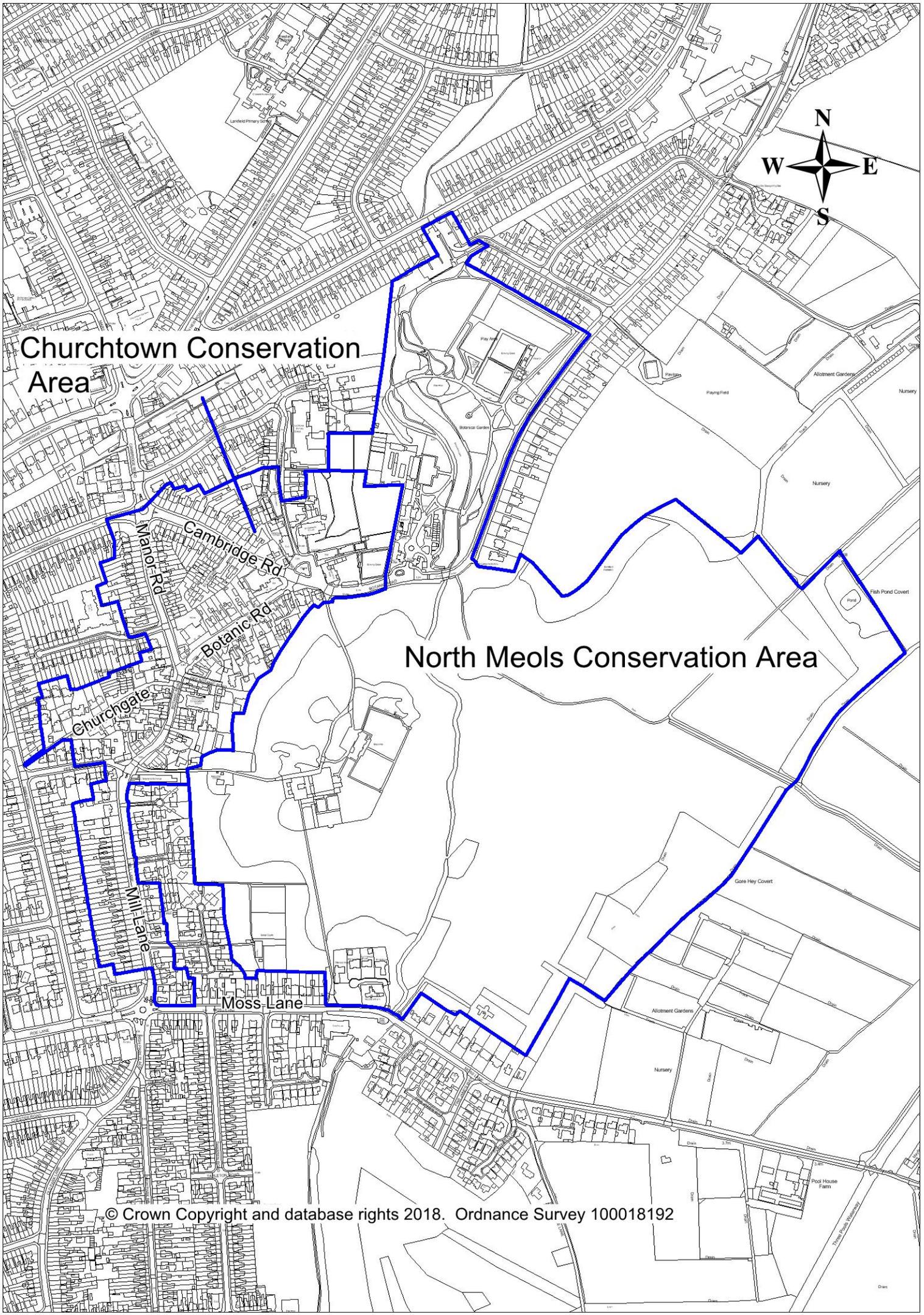


Figure 16 Plan showing proposed addition to Churchtown Conservation Area



**Churchtown Conservation Area**

**North Meols Conservation Area**



## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A : BIBLIOGRAPHY

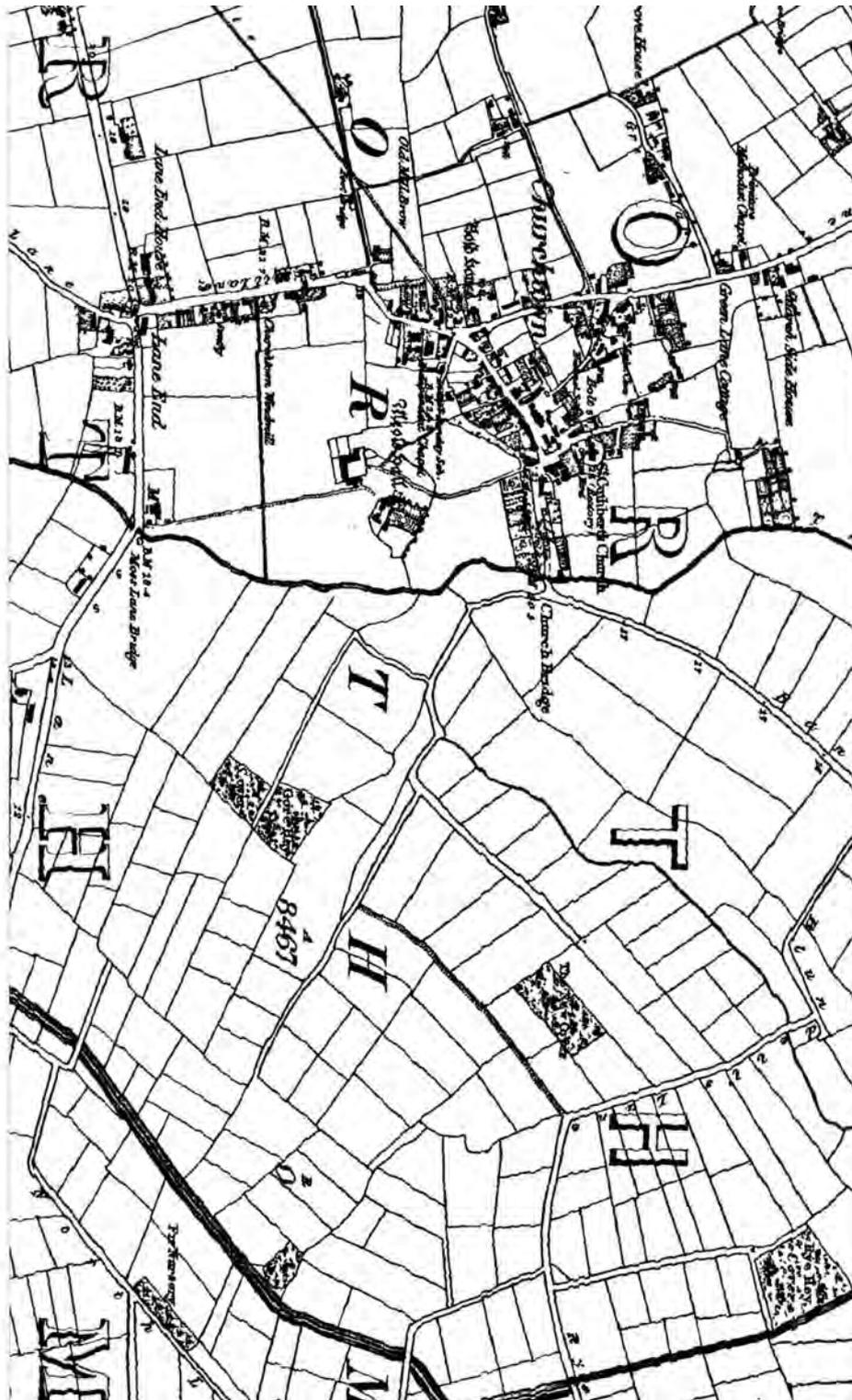
Author	Title	Publisher	Date
Baines, Edward (ed. Harland, John)	History of the County Palatine and Duchy of Lancaster Vol 2	Routledge	1870
Fielding, Andrew	Churchtown in Camera	Sefton Libraries	
Greenwood, Cedric	Thatch, Towers and Colonnades, The Story of Architecture in Southport	Carnegie Publishing	1990
Lewis, Jennifer	Meols Hall, Churchtown, Southport	Dept. of Archaeology, Univ. of Liverpool (unpublished paper)	1994 (Dec)
Pevsner, Nikolaus (ed.)	Buildings of England : North Lancashire	Penguin	1969
	A History of the County of Lancashire Vol 3	Victoria County Histories	1907
	Streets for All : North West	English Heritage	
	The Churchtown Village Trail	North Meols Civic Society	
	Churchtown and North Meols Conservation Area	Borough of Sefton	
	The Botanic Gardens Museum Souvenir Guide	Borough of Sefton	

## APPENDIX B : HISTORIC MAPS

List of maps reproduced on the following pages:

1	Reproduction map	1786
2	Ordnance Survey	1830
3	Ordnance Survey 1 <sup>st</sup> edition	1842
4	OS	1893
5	OS	1911
6	OS	1928 with additions





1st ed OS 6" Survey Epoch 1 c.1850







OS Mapping reproduced from Sefton Council's Archives



## Appendix C

### Schedule of changes to Churchtown and North Meols Conservation Areas Appraisal following public consultation

Paragraph	Description of alteration
2.2, 1 <sup>st</sup> sentence	<b>Alter</b> “Churchtown is towards the north end of a low coastal spit of land <u>running north from the mouth of the Mersey</u> ” <b>to</b> “Churchtown is towards the north end of a low coastal spit of land <u>on the south bank of the Ribble estuary</u> ”
3.1, 3 <sup>rd</sup> para	<b>Alter</b> “The other focus of influence in the area was Meols Hall <u>which probably stands on the site of a former watermill on the river known as The Pool or (tellingly) Otterpool, the remains of the former drainage channel from Martin Mere.</u> ” <b>to</b> “The other focus of influence in the area was Meols Hall. <u>A watermill formerly stood within what is now the grounds of Meols Hall on the watercourse known as The Pool or (tellingly) Otterpool, which was a former eel fishery.</u> ”
3.1, 5 <sup>th</sup> para 1 <sup>st</sup> sentence	<b>Delete</b> “The form of the settlement suggests that its focus was the church and market place to the south, with ordinary dwellings appearing along the street now known as Botanic Road, but formerly part of the main approach road from the south west”
3.1, 5 <sup>th</sup> para, after 1 <sup>st</sup> sentence	<b>add</b> “It is most likely that the original market was held in the stretch of Botanic Road between Manor Road and Peet’s Lane. This area acquired the name of ‘Cocks Clod’.”
3.1, 5 <sup>th</sup> para, last sentence	<b>Move</b> last sentence to become first sentence of 6 <sup>th</sup> Para
Figure 5	<b>Add</b> “ <u>lodges and lock up</u> ”
3.3, para 5, 1 <sup>st</sup> sentence	<b>Alter</b> “The Gardens contained a number of striking and important structures – the lodges, the lake and its bridges, the large conservatory (now demolished), the fernery and the museum.” <b>to</b> “The Gardens contained a number of striking and important structures – the lodges <u>and lock up</u> , the lake and its bridges, the large conservatory (now demolished), the fernery and the museum.”
4.2, 5 <sup>th</sup> para, 1 <sup>st</sup> sentence	<b>Alter</b> “The key open spaces within the Churchtown area are the main streets themselves, the nodes or intersections (of which the most important <u>is the Market Place</u> ) and the churchyard.” <b>To</b> “The key open spaces within the Churchtown area are the main streets themselves, the nodes or intersections (of which the most important <u>is the node in front of the church</u> ) and the churchyard.”
4.3, 3 <sup>rd</sup> para 2 <sup>nd</sup> sentence	<b>Alter</b> “As far as the Conservation Areas are concerned the key one is that which passes <u>through the Market Place</u> and to the east of the Botanic Gardens” <b>To</b> “As far as the Conservation Areas are concerned the key one is that which passes <u>in front of the Church</u> and to the east of the Botanic Gardens.”
4.4, 3 <sup>rd</sup> para 1 <sup>st</sup> sentence	<b>Alter</b> “The principal exception to this is the changing nature of the journey from <u>Market Place</u> north east past the Botanic Gardens to Bankfield Lane” <b>to</b> “The principal exception to this is the changing nature of the journey from the <u>church green</u> , north east past the Botanic Gardens to Bankfield Lane.”
4.4, 4 <sup>th</sup> para	<b>Alter</b> “Views of the church are important to the area, and in some places help to identify location. The key views of the church are from in and around the <u>market place</u> ” <b>to</b> Views of the

	church are important to the area, and in some places help to identify location. The key views of the church are from in and around the <u>church green</u> ”
4.4 5 <sup>th</sup> para, 1 <sup>st</sup> sentence	<b>Alter</b> “There is a series of identifiable node points from which the key ‘static’ views are obtained. The principal node point is the <u>market place</u> ” <b>To</b> “There is a series of identifiable node points from which the key ‘static’ views are obtained. The principal node point is the <u>church green</u> ”
4.8 Churchyard 1 <sup>st</sup> paragraph	<b>Alter</b> “The sense of ‘designed’ enclosure of this space is almost non-existent. Such enclosure as exists is provided by surrounding buildings – the school, the Botanic Gardens glasshouses and the rear of the museum and the north wall of the church institute” <b>to</b> “The churchyard would benefit from a greater sense of enclosure. Such enclosure as exists is provided by surrounding buildings – the school, the Botanic Gardens glasshouses and the rear of the museum and the north wall of the church institute.”
4.8 Churchyard 3 <sup>rd</sup> paragraph	<b>Alter</b> “Two adjacent spaces are the small Garden of Remembrance and the bowling green. There are particular management issues with these but as above attempts to improve the visual separation should be encouraged.” <b>To</b> “Two adjacent spaces are the small Garden of Remembrance and the bowling green. Attempts to improve the unique identities of these spaces and provide greater visual separation should be encouraged. Any such measures should predominantly rely on soft landscaping”
4.8, 5 <sup>th</sup> para. 1 <sup>st</sup> sentence	<b>Alter</b> “This is a small public garden on the north side of Cambridge Road near to the Village Square and is maintained by North Meols Civic <u>Trust</u> ” <b>to</b> “This is a small public garden on the north side of Cambridge Road near to the Village Square and is maintained by North Meols Civic <u>Society</u> ”
5.3 4. Main Entrance to Meols Hall, 1 <sup>st</sup> sentence	<b>Alter</b> “This group forms the focus of the view east from the <u>Market Place</u> ” <b>to</b> “This group forms the focus of the view east from the <u>church green</u> ”
5.3 5. Main entrance to Botanic Gardens 2 <sup>nd</sup> sentence	<b>Alter</b> “There is a semicircular approach leading off the road, with curved fencing and hedges leading into a symmetrical pair of brick built lodges and a former lock up known locally as ‘the pound’.” <b>to</b> “There is a semicircular approach leading off the road, with curved fencing and hedges leading into a symmetrical pair of brick built lodges <u>and a former lock up known locally as ‘the pound’.</u> ”
5.3 5. Main entrance to Botanic Gardens	<b>Add new paragraph at end</b> “The lock up replaced an earlier building on the site. The present structure originally opened onto Botanic Road and has been used as a tram and bus shelter. It has since been altered to open inwards and serves the boating concession.”
5.3 7. The Bold Arms	This building forms a significant component of the view south west from the <u>Market Place</u> being in the space between Botanic Road and Cambridge Road. This building forms a significant component of the view south west from the <u>church green</u> being in the space between Botanic Road and Cambridge Road.

5.3 8. The Hesketh Arms	<b>Alter</b> “This building which faces the viewer in the photograph above closes off the view as you travel north on Botanic Road to the <u>market place</u> and also along Cambridge Road.” <b>to</b> “This building which faces the viewer in the photograph above closes off the view as you travel north on Botanic Road to the <u>church green</u> and also along Cambridge Road.”
5.4 Lighting Pillars	<b>Alter</b> “The shorter lighting columns are <u>listed structures</u> and the new lighting should relate to these.” <b>to</b> “The shorter lighting columns were introduced by Col. Roger Hesketh in the mid-20 <sup>th</sup> Century and are now listed structures. Any new lighting should relate to these.”
5.4 The Stocks	<b>Alter</b> “Security may be required but the spiky fence <u>seems a little extreme.</u> ” <b>To</b> “Security may be required but the spiky fence <u>does not enhance their setting.</u> ”
5.4 Obelisk	<b>Alter</b> “The <u>war memorial</u> obelisk stands in the centre of the green island in front of the church.” <b>to</b> “The obelisk stands in the centre of the green island in front of the church.”  <b>Insert new fourth sentence</b> “The structure came from Lathom Hall near Burscough and was re-erected on the green in the mid 20 <sup>th</sup> Century.”
5.4 clay paviours, 1 <sup>st</sup> sentence	<b>Alter</b> “Clay paviours are widely used in <u>the older part of</u> the village and in the path leading to the Botanic Gardens” <b>to</b> “Clay paviours are widely used in the village and in the path leading to the Botanic Gardens.”
5.4	<b>Alter</b> “Opportunities to provide <u>similar</u> paviours, as opposed to tarmac or modern slabs should be taken where possible.” <b>to</b> “Opportunities to provide <u>new matching</u> paviours, as opposed to tarmac or modern slabs should be taken where possible. <u>This would help unify the street scene.</u> ”
6.1 last para, last sentence	<b>Add</b> “The phone shop in the centre has overmuch signage positioned haphazardly and unattractively.”
7.1.2 7 <sup>th</sup> para	<b>Alter</b> “Threading through the gardens is the Serpentine Lake, with its small <u>stream-like</u> extension to the north.” <b>to</b> “Threading through the gardens is the Serpentine Lake, with its small <u>stream</u> extension to the north.”
7.1.3, 2 <sup>nd</sup> para, 1 <sup>st</sup> sentence	<b>Alter</b> “This zone comprises a fairly loose association of spaces focussed around the <u>market square</u> ” <b>to</b> “This zone comprises a fairly loose association of spaces focussed around the <u>church square</u> ”
7.1.3, 2 <sup>nd</sup> para, last sentence	<b>Alter</b> “To the north west is the more linear development along <u>Sally’s Lane</u> , the rest being occupied by the spaces around <u>Market Square</u> ” <b>to</b> “To the north west is the more linear development along <u>St Cuthbert’s Road</u> , the rest being occupied by the spaces around the church green”
7.1.3, 5 <sup>th</sup> para, 1 <sup>st</sup> sentence	<b>Alter</b> “ <u>Sally’s Lane</u> is a narrow street leading off the <u>market place</u> fronted by cottages of single, or low two-storey height.” <b>to</b> “ <u>St Cuthbert’s Road</u> is a narrow street leading off the <u>church square</u> fronted by cottages of single, or low two-storey height.”
7.1.3, 6 <sup>th</sup> para, 1 <sup>st</sup> sentence	<b>Alter</b> “The key area within this sub-zone is the <u>Market Place</u> ” <b>to</b> “The key area within this sub-zone is the <u>church square</u> ”
7.1.3, 7 <sup>th</sup> para, 1 <sup>st</sup> sentence	<b>Alter</b> “In the diagram above the key facades fronting the Market Place and the ones which contribute to the sense of enclosure of the space are shown with a red dotted line.” <b>to</b> “In the diagram above the key facades fronting the Church Square and the ones

	which contribute to the sense of enclosure of the space are shown with a red dotted line”
7.1.3, 7 <sup>th</sup> para, last sentence	<b>Alter</b> “In order to maintain the sense of place it is important that this line is maintained <u>or even strengthened if possible.</u> <u>The use of extra tree screen around the churchyard would assist.</u> ” <b>to</b> “In order to maintain the sense of place it is important that this line is maintained.”
7.1.3, 8 <sup>th</sup> para	<b>Delete paragraph</b> “The main traffic routes are shown in blue. The east west route is two way, the others are one way. The dotted route is an access only route.”
7.1.3, 9 <sup>th</sup> para (to become 8 <sup>th</sup> para, 1 <sup>st</sup> sentence	<b>Alter</b> “There are a variety of surfaces in the market place including grass in the centre around the trees.” <b>to</b> “There are a variety of surfaces in the church square including grass in the centre around the trees.”
10 <sup>th</sup> Para (to become 9 <sup>th</sup> para) last sentence	<b>Delete</b> “It would be helpful if all parking was removed from the square and the space left free for pedestrians and for people to sit out.” <b>and replace with</b> “The parking is detrimental to the attractiveness of the space.”
7.1.3, 16 <sup>th</sup> para (to become 15 <sup>th</sup> para), 1 <sup>st</sup> sentence	<b>Alter</b> “At the northern end of Botanic Road, just next to the <u>Market Place</u> there is a much greater consistency of height of shops.” <b>To</b> “At the northern end of Botanic Road, just next to the <u>church square</u> there is a much greater consistency of height of shops.”
7.2, 3 <sup>rd</sup> para	<b>Alter</b> “The <u>three</u> unlisted structures which make a contribution to the character of the area are:” <b>to</b> “The <u>four</u> unlisted structures which make a <u>key</u> contribution to the character of the area are:”
7.2 1 The former shelter	This structure has been re-named as the ‘shelter’ (was ‘bandstand’)
7.2 1. The former shelter	<b>Alter</b> “It is a Victorian Gothic structure comparable in quality with the other structures in the park <u>and arguably it should be listed as part of the park’s ensemble of historic structures.</u> ” <b>to</b> “It is a Victorian Gothic structure comparable in quality with the other structures in the park. <u>Originally it was built as a shelter with benches encircling it inside, and outside with glazed windows providing shelter. Restoration of the structure to its original appearance would be beneficial.</u> ”
7.2 2. The Church Hall	<b>Alter</b> “However it has a positive effect in closing off the corner of the <u>Market Place</u> , and given a little sensitive restoration could make a real contribution to this important open space” <b>to</b> “However it has a positive effect in closing off the corner of the <u>church square</u> , and given a little sensitive restoration could make a real contribution to this important open space
7.2	<b>Add at end of section</b> <b>4 The Bowling Pavilion</b> “This structure was built in 1938 by the Southport Corporation and is therefore a later addition to the park. Though built by the corporation, its design is attributed to Peter Fleetwood Hesketh who was influenced by the designs of architect Decimus Burton. It is an attractive building incorporating Greek and Gothic architectural influences.”
7.4 4 <sup>th</sup> para	<b>Alter</b> “Churchtown – Church, <u>Market Square</u> , Botanic Road and Churchgate” <b>to</b> “Churchtown – Church, <u>Church Square</u> , Botanic Road and Churchgate”

8.2.3 1 <sup>st</sup> para, 3 <sup>rd</sup> sentence	<b>Alter</b> “It would be helpful to provide some designated parking within easy reach of the <u>Market Square</u> which is the focus of the village” <b>to</b> “It would be helpful to provide some designated parking within easy reach of the <u>Church Square</u> which is the focus of the village”
8.2.3 2 <sup>nd</sup> para	<b>Alter</b> “Designating of certain areas for parking and restricting others, for example the environs of the <u>Market Square</u> , would improve the environmental and visual standard of the area to a significant degree” <b>to</b> “Designating of certain areas for parking and restricting others, for example the environs of the <u>Church Square</u> , would improve the environmental and visual standard of the area to a significant degree.”
8.2.9 3 <sup>rd</sup> sentence	<b>Alter</b> “Areas where tarmac could be replaced with setts and tiles are <u>Sally’s Lane</u> , the remainder of the <u>Market Place</u> , and the middle section of Botanic Road from Bold Arms down to the junction with Manor Road” <b>to</b> “Areas where tarmac could be replaced with setts and tiles are <u>St Cuthbert’s Road</u> , the remainder of the <u>Church Square</u> , and the middle section of Botanic Road from Bold Arms down to the junction with Manor Road”
8.2.11 1 <sup>st</sup> sentence	<b>Alter</b> “Around the entrance to Meols Hall and around the green area of the <u>Market Square</u> there is low post and chain fencing.” <b>to</b> “Around the entrance to Meols Hall and around the green area of the <u>Church Square</u> there is low post and chain fencing.”
8.2.14	<b>Delete</b> “The main exception to this is in the churchyard area. As observed this is a large relatively undivided space. It has a great deal of visual incident at ground and low level provided by the graves but above this it appears as one large and to a degree undefined space. The introduction of appropriate tree screen planting at the edge and within the layout would help to ameliorate the openness and reduce the expanse of the burial area. It is recognised that this not an easy issue to address in a largely replete grave yard but maybe as years progress some of the older graves could become reserved for memorial trees or the like.” <b>and replace with</b> “However should the opportunity arise, sensitive tree planting may be beneficial within the churchyard to improve the quality of the space.”
9.2 Mill Lane, 2 <sup>nd</sup> sentence	<b>Alter</b> “On the east side of the Lane the continuity of the historic structures is broken by some late C20 houses, <u>but these stand on the site of the former Windmill and so the location itself has interest.</u> ” <b>to</b> “On the east side of the Lane the continuity of the historic structures is broken by some late C20 houses, <u>which are not proposed for inclusion</u> ”
9.2 Mill Lane, 3 <sup>rd</sup> para, 1 <sup>st</sup> sentence	<b>Alter</b> “The south boundary would be formed by the north side of the road known as Moss Lane. On the opposite side the boundary should extend as far as <u>Roe Lane.</u> ” <b>to</b> “The south boundary would be formed by the north side of the road known as Moss Lane. On the opposite side the boundary should extend as far as <u>13 Mill Lane.</u> ”