

WEST BIRKDALE

Conservation Area

History and Architectural Significance

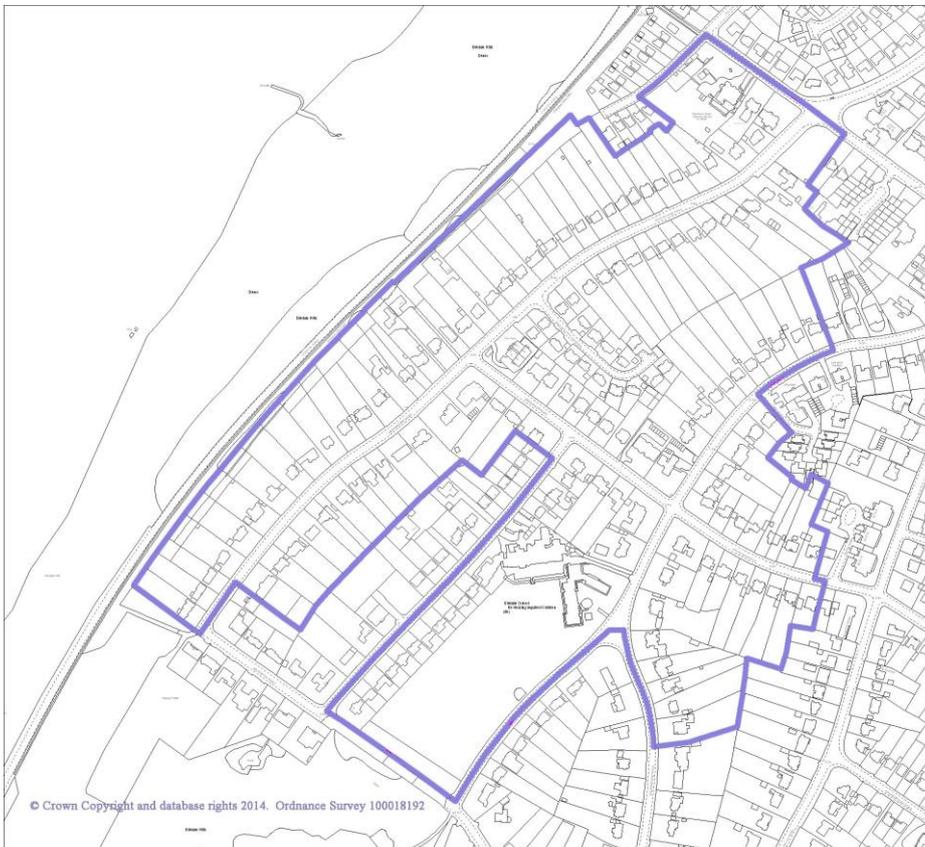
The early history of Birkdale is fairly obscure; it is thought to date back to Viking times. There is known to have been a settlement here around the time of the Domesday Book in 1086 and there seems little doubt that it is the surviving part of the district of Argarmeols, (spelt Erengermeles in the Domesday Book). There have been many variations of the name Birkdale, such as 'Bertil' and 'Birthile', the first recorded use of the name Birkdale is in the Chartulary of Cockersand Abbey round 1200. It is thought to be a corruption of the old Norse words "birki" meaning birch-copse and "dalr", meaning dale.

By the 1660s Birkdale had a population of about 150, having remained unchanged for centuries as an area of scattered farmsteads and humble thatched dwellings. Positioned on an exposed coastline without even the nucleus of a church or manor house, it was described in 1834 as "a cheerless, bleak, forlorn little region partly occupied by sandhills and meagre pasture grounds." The area was in the possession of the Halsall family until about 1600 but in 1632 Birkdale was purchased by Robert Blundell, of Ince Blundell, the Blundells retained possession of the lands until 1837, when lacking a male heir, the land passed to a distant relative, Thomas

Weld, who under the terms of Charles Blundell's will assumed the name Blundell into his own, thereby becoming Thomas Weld Blundell.

In 1848 Thomas Weld Blundell secured an act of Parliament enabling him to offer land to be developed on attractive terms on what is now called Birkdale Park. The original plan was drawn up by landscape designer Edward Kemp and comprised of 100 plots of land. Development was slow at first, but by 1859 the rapid growth of Gloucester, Lulworth and Westcliffe Roads were plain to see, and in 1865 Birkdale had become an independent parish with the characteristics of a separate town.

In 1866 Thomas Weld-Blundell commissioned architects Reade and Goodison to design a layout for what was to become phase two of Birkdale Park. The designated area lay to the south of the earlier development, beyond Weld Road



where previously housing had finished. This development was planned to comprise around 175 detached houses set in spacious grounds, and a small number of larger buildings, presumably these were intended to be facilities such as schools and hotels. The development was to be centered on a circus, with a series of concentric curved roads and axes radiating out from it. At the very centre was to be a public park. The actual layout of the area that was built did differ from the original Reade and Goodison plan. The buildings shown on the plan were distinctly gothic in character, with steeply pitched roofs with complicated arrangements of gables and towers. From about 1890 onwards housing in what is now West Birkdale conservation area was rapidly constructed.

Between 1851 and 1891 the population of Birkdale grew from 625 to 12,387 people and in 1884 the Southport and Cheshire Lines Extension Railway opened, this included a station at the Birkdale Palace Hotel, the station was located on Palace Road. The act allowing construction of the railway also insisted on the proper setting out of Rotten Row, which had previously been little more than a track, as well as provision of a recreation ground that was to become Victoria Park. In 1912 Southport and Birkdale were merged into a single borough.

The post war years saw a decline in the wealth and status of the area, Birkdale Palace Station was closed in 1952 and the Palace Hotel closed and was demolished in 1969.

The Conservation Area

Sefton Council designated West Birkdale Conservation Area in October 1988; it was extended in 2008 under Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. It is one of four conservation areas in Birkdale; the other three are Birkdale Park, Gloucester Road and Birkdale Village.

The character of West Birkdale Conservation Area is indelibly linked to the impressive range of late Victorian and Edwardian buildings, and its historic development as the second phase of Birkdale Park.

Attractive Victorian and Edwardian buildings are abundant within the conservation area. These are almost universally large houses with long gardens, some of which have been converted into flats. Later buildings were in a more romantic style composed of brick with steeper roofs and half timbering in attractive and ingenious combinations. Round towers adorn some of the more flamboyant Victorian properties. The revival of Tudor/Elizabethan style with smooth red Accrington brick and black and white half timbered upper floors, marked the development of later Victorian houses in the 1880s and this architectural treatment remained popular through into the 1930s. Development

spread from Lulworth Road, Beach Road, Westbourne Road, Grosvenor Road, Lancaster Road, Waterloo Road towards Selworthy Road.

The conservation area is notable within the Birkdale area for its relatively cohesive townscape formed of late Victorian and Edwardian houses set in large gardens, Southport paviers, brick boundary walls and mature trees.



Property in Grosvenor Road

Additional Planning Powers

It is not the intention of the Council to prevent all change in the conservation area, but rather to ensure that new developments, alterations or extensions are in keeping with its historic character and any harm is balanced against wider public benefits.

Conservation Area status means that the Council possesses a number of statutory powers to safeguard against some changes. These are special planning controls which relate to specific works which would normally be considered 'permitted development', i.e. works which would not require planning consent.

Within the Conservation Area the following additional planning powers apply:-

If a building is a Listed Building additional special controls will also apply.

- Any proposal involving the demolition of any building, wall or other structure within the Conservation Area (with minor exceptions) will require planning permission.

- Anyone wishing to cut down, top, lop or uproot a tree with a stem diameter of 75mm or greater measured at 1.5m above ground level must give the Local Planning Authority six weeks written notice of their intention to do so (a "Section 211 notice" under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) subject to specific exemptions. Within this time the Authority may grant consent for the proposed work, or they may consider making a Tree Preservation Order. It is an offence to carry out tree works without permission.
- There are greater restrictions over 'permitted development' rights for the alteration and enlargement of dwellinghouses, and on the provision, alteration or improvement of outbuildings within their curtilage. Development to the side of buildings, or two storey development to the rear will require planning permission.
- Dormer windows will require planning permission, and in some cases, other changes to roofs and chimneys may require planning permission.
- The cladding of any part of external walls in stone, artificial stone, pebble dash, render, timber, plastic or tiles requires planning permission.
- Planning permission is needed for satellite dishes where they are to be located on a chimney, wall or roof slope which faces onto a highway.
- Micro-generation (e.g. wind turbines/solar panels) installations will require planning permission in some cases.
- The design of any new building (including form, massing, scale and materials) and its integration with its immediate surroundings and the special architectural and visual qualities of the Conservation Area.
- The retention and preservation of existing trees and the provision of further appropriate landscaping.
- The retention and enhancement of views into and out of the area, vistas within the area and the general character and appearance of the street scene and roofscape.

Guidance Notes for planning applications and use of materials:

Pre-Application Advice

You can request advice from the planning department prior to submitting a formal application. In some cases we make a charge for this service. Forms are available on the Council's website.

Planning Applications

A Heritage Statement will be needed to support your planning application, this should include an explanation of what the significance of the property is, and what impact the proposals have on that significance.

Outline applications will not usually be considered.

Demolition

The demolition or redevelopment of any building of individual or group value will not be permitted unless the Local Planning Authority is satisfied that the building cannot be used for any suitable purpose and it is not important enough to merit the costs involved in its preservation. Any consent to demolish would normally be conditional on the building not being demolished before a contract is made to carry out redevelopment. This redevelopment must be of a high standard of design.

New development on vacant sites

Any new development should be conceived with the original layout, architectural character and scale of the area in mind. Early discussions with the Planning Services are advised prior to any design work being commenced. The services of a qualified architect are strongly recommended.

Conversion of existing buildings

Where planning permission to convert buildings into new uses is sought, the new use and internal layout of the building should be carefully considered. Particular attention will be paid to the building's external appearance, character of the building, use of materials, the layout of gardens and car parks and the position of bin stores.

For up to date advice on what needs planning permission go to www.planningportal.gov.uk In determining applications for the development of land and alterations or extensions to buildings within the West Birkdale Conservation Area the Council will pay special regard to:-

- The retention, replacement and restoration of historical details and features of the buildings and their gardens including layout, boundary walls and landscaping.
- The design and detail of extensions and alterations to existing buildings, which will be expected to be sympathetic to the architectural and historic character of the building as a whole and to the setting of that building.

Every effort should be made to minimise external alterations, such as fire escapes and new windows (including dormer windows). Where external changes are required it should be made to a non-prominent elevation. Alterations or extensions should use the carefully chosen materials that match/complement the building. Again, the services of a qualified architect are strongly recommended.



External alterations to existing buildings including extensions

The following deals with some of the details of alterations and extensions to buildings.

Windows

There are a number of types and styles of original windows in the area. They should be retained and renovated where possible. If all or part of any window needs to be replaced it should match the original design. Care should be taken to ensure that 'reveals' are retained. This is important for practical (weather protection) as well as aesthetic reasons. If additional windows are essential, they should be restricted to the non-prominent elevations. Their size and proportion should match the original windows.

When repairing/replacing windows care must be taken to retain and restore details. Imitation 'leaded' lights should always be avoided whilst aluminium and UPVC windows have a different surface finish, are likely to

have different detailing and proportions to the existing and consequently are likely to detract from the character of the building.

Dormer Windows

New dormer windows are not generally accepted on principle elevations. Any new dormer windows should be well-proportioned, designed to complement the character of the building and kept to non-prominent elevations. Any new cladding must match roofing materials.

Wall Surfaces

Brickwork and stonework should not be painted or rendered. Areas of brickwork or stonework requiring renewal should be repaired or replaced in their original form or pattern. Brick pointing should be compatible with existing construction, which is generally flush finish. Repointing should be carried out with lime mortar rather than cement to prevent softer bricks from deteriorating. Where stonework is to be cleaned, professional advice should be sought as the incorrect choice of treatments can result in damage.

Brick and terracotta features such as keystones, corbels, finials and leaf designs should be retained wherever possible. Cladding of brickwork in stone, artificial stone, pebble dash, render, timber, plastic or tiles is not permitted for practical as well as aesthetic reasons and the use of bright obtrusive colours for stucco render should be avoided. If missing or damaged, stucco or plaster mouldings and similar details should be replaced in their original form or pattern. Care should be taken to use correct mixes and finishing coats.

Roofs

Original rooflines and profiles should be maintained. Any renewals or repairs should use reclaimed or new materials to match the original roof covering. Care should be taken to retain roof features such as decorated ridge tiles, eaves and gables details.

Chimneys

In most cases, the original chimney stacks and pots form an integral part of the design of buildings and create an interesting 'roofscape'. It is important, therefore, to opt for repairing rather than dismantling stacks if no longer in use. If the stacks become unsafe, then they should be taken down and rebuilt to the original height and design taking care to replace chimney pots.

Satellite Dishes and Aerials

Aerials and satellite dishes should be located as sensitively as possible and should avoid main street elevations.

Front Doors

Original doors should be retained and repaired wherever possible. Replacements should be to a sympathetic design. Wooden moulded and panelled doors are likely to be the most suitable. "Georgian style" doors with imitation semi-circular fanlights should be particularly avoided. Care should be taken to retain and repair details around openings, such as architraves, thresholds, transoms and fanlights.

Porticoes and Porches

These features should be retained and repaired where necessary. Mineral felt or other similar roofing materials should not be used. Where new porches and porticoes are proposed they should be appropriately designed with materials that are sympathetic to the age and style of the building, where porches are not part of the original design of the building, their addition should be avoided.

Boundary Walls, Fences, Gates and Gate Posts

Original brick and stone boundary walls, including their stone or terracotta copings, should be repaired or rebuilt to the original design, using reclaimed or matching materials. Boundary walls and gateposts should not be painted, this has a poor visual appearance and can trap moisture which will cause deterioration.

Wooden fences and railings should not be installed above existing walls, particularly along frontages. The street scene can be 'softened' and enhanced by the planting of boundary hedges, which has the added benefit of improving privacy.

Openings in boundary walls should be kept to a minimum especially on principal street elevations so that the streetscape is not adversely affected. Gates should utilise authentic designs, avoiding the use of gold or multi-coloured paints.

Services

Wherever possible original rainwater gutters and downpipes should be replaced in cast iron to the same patterns. If replacements cannot be obtained then cast aluminium of similar colour and profile could be considered. Care should be taken in the siting of burglar alarms, central heating flues, meter boxes and bin store locations so as not to detract from the appearance of principal elevations.

Maintenance

It is strongly advised that owners keep their property in good repair and condition. Regular and thorough maintenance can help avoid major structural repairs that can develop through neglect.

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