

## Advisory Leaflet

# Birkdale Village Conservation Area

### History

The name 'Birkdale' has had different variations throughout the centuries but it is believed to be a compound of the old Norse words 'birki' (meaning birch copse) and 'dal' (meaning dale). Birkdale itself is not mentioned in the Domesday Survey, but the early history of the area is tied to Ainsdale as it formed part of the same area known as Argarmeols. The topography of the area changed little over centuries, being a thinly populated area of scattered farmsteads, marshy land and exposed coastline.

In 1837 the lands passed from ownership of the Blundells to the Weld family. Thomas Weld Blundell, the new owner, took on the Blundell name in accordance with the terms of Charles Robert Blundell's will. Seeing an opportunity brought about by the coming of the railway, which he was active in supporting, Thomas Weld Blundell secured an act of parliament to develop Birkdale for high-class housing comparable to that built at Southport, and this was constructed towards the coast. The railway was introduced to Birkdale in 1848, with the original station located just south of the present day one.

While Southport grew as a popular resort, Birkdale provided homes for the rich and a keen rivalry began. Birkdale soon became a town in its own right. In 1863 it came under the control of an elected Board of Commissioners and it received its own Town Hall, constructed in 1871 on Weld Road. This was followed in 1891 by a police station. By 1894 Birkdale Urban District Council was formed. Other municipal buildings were built including a fire station and library. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Birkdale's town centre developed around Liverpool Road, Weld Road and the railway station. The character of the main street was of a canopied range of shops and broad pavements. In 1912 Birkdale finally amalgamated with Southport.

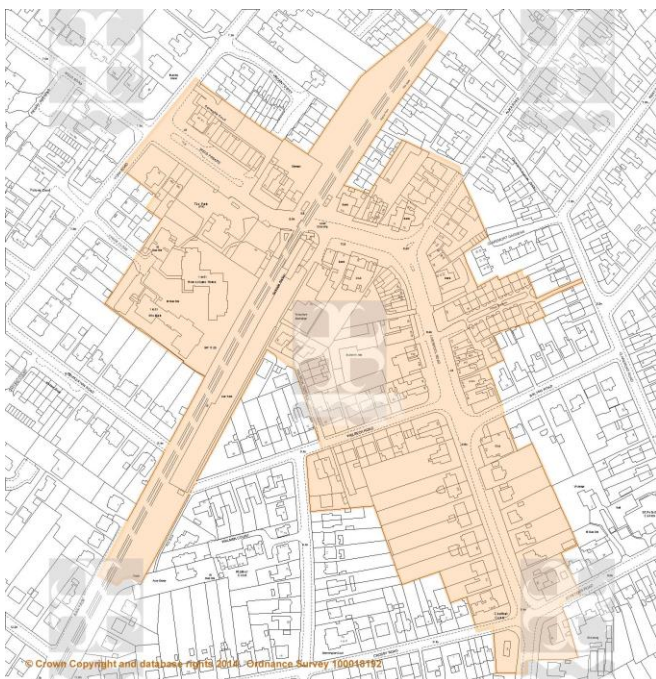
Through the 1960s and early 1970s, Birkdale lost important municipal buildings, including the police station, the town hall and the free library. A group of buildings at the corner of Liverpool Road and Alma Road was demolished and replaced by a row of shops culminating in a six storey residential block at what is now called Weld Parade, altering considerably the centre of the original Birkdale town centre.

### The Conservation Area

The Birkdale Village conservation area was designated by Sefton Council in 1981. The boundary of the area was slightly altered following the Appraisal of the area in 2011. The conservation area is centred on Birkdale railway station and includes the picturesque Birkdale village centre, and many notable buildings. It extends to the upper section of Liverpool Road, with its southernmost point located at No 74. This is a grade II\* listed building and dates to the early to mid 17th century.

It is important to note that the village did not develop from an earlier settlement. Its development was instead a later incidental addition to the growth of the suburb.

Of all the shop frontages found in Birkdale, the most impressive is Victoria Chambers (18-34 Liverpool



Road) designed in 1894 by the influential Southport architect E.W Johnson. With its glazed iron canopy (which was extensively refurbished in the 1980s) and a central double gable and half timbering, this curved building provides a vigorous sweep to Liverpool Road as it turns towards the level crossing. The railway station and its peripheral buildings, including the signal box, a listed grade II building of 1905 and a rare surviving example of a hipped roof style of Lancashire and Yorkshire signal box, form an architecturally interesting group of buildings and of historical importance to the village. The opening of the railway stimulated the growth of Birkdale with its large merchants' houses and prompted the establishment of the village to serve its inhabitants.

There is an impressive group of banks in the village area, all except one built in the period 1907-1911. Barclays Bank, built in 1907 as the Bank of Liverpool, is probably the most distinguished of them all, occupying a prime position on the corner of Liverpool Road and Alma Road. Others that deserve mention are the HSBC, an elegant neo-classical building of 1908; the Queen Anne style National Westminster Bank (1911); and the oldest of the group, the Royal Bank of Scotland, built in 1894.

The Conservative Club (No 12 Liverpool Road) was designed by the Liverpool architect James Dodd in 1888. Further along, on the other side of the railway station is the Park Hotel, an early Birkdale building of c.1860, but which has been altered in recent years. Abbey Gardens, a group of delightfully landscaped Edwardian town houses, form a peaceful haven off Liverpool Road, and still retain most of their original architectural features.

Other attractive features of Birkdale Village are the Southport pavilions, fine elegant canopies and the eye catching tree lined curve of Liverpool Road. All of these, together with its buildings, create a unique sense of place.

### Additional Planning Powers

Sefton Council recognises that for Conservation Areas to remain "live" and responsive to a changing society, changes will and must occur. Through the planning system the Council undertakes to ensure that changes preserve or enhance the area, and do not result in the loss of 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 substantial demolition of any building within the Conservation Area (with some 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.
- 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 or plastic would require planning permission.
- Planning permission is needed for the installation of satellite dishes where they are to be located on a chimney, wall or roof slope which faces onto a highway.
- Micro-generation installations (e.g. wind turbines/solar panels) will require planning permission in some cases.
- Some aspects of commercial development and adverts are subject to additional restrictions.

For up to date advice on what needs planning permission go to [www.planningportal.co.uk](http://www.planningportal.co.uk) In determining applications for the development of land and alterations or extensions to buildings within the Birkdale Village Conservation Area the Council will pay special regard to:-

- The retention, replacement and restoration of historical details and features of the buildings and their grounds including layout, boundary walls and landscaping, shop fronts, historic advertisements and joinery details.
- The design, materials and detail of extensions and alterations to existing buildings which will be expected to be in sympathy with the architectural and historic character of the building as a whole and to the setting of that building.
- The detailed 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 Planning Services 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 heritage significance of the site is, and how the design takes this into account.

### 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 and will normally be granted planning permission at the same time.

### 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 consultation with Planning Services is advised. 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, use of materials, the layout of open spaces, car parking and the position of bin stores.

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 carefully chosen materials that match or complement the building. 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 or replacing windows, care must be taken to retain and restore details. Imitation 'leaded' lights should always be avoided, whilst aluminium and UPVC windows which have a different surface finish, are likely to have different detailing and proportions to the originals and consequently are likely to detract from the character of the building.

### Dormer Windows

New dormer windows are not generally accepted unless they can be shown to complement the original design. Any new dormer windows must be well-proportioned and kept to non-prominent elevations. Any new cladding must match roofing materials.

### Wall Surfaces

Brickwork and stonework should not be painted or rendered. In replacing existing traditional render or dash, the new render should be chosen to match that removed in both materials and appearance. Areas of brickwork or stonework requiring renewal should be repaired or replaced in their original form or pattern. 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 or stones 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.

Stucco render or plaster mouldings and similar details should be replaced in their original form or pattern if missing or damaged. Care should be taken to use correct mixes and finishing coats. Dry dash or pebble dash is typical of some late 19th or early 20th century buildings and any repair should be to a similar finish.

### 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 decorative ridge tiles, finials, open eaves and verge details.

### Chimneys

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 they are 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 front doors and door surrounds 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.

### Porches

Where porches are not part of the original design of the building, their addition should be avoided. Where new porches are proposed they should be appropriately designed with materials that are sympathetic to the age and style of the building. Classical style porticoes are inappropriate.

### Boundary Walls, Fences, Gates and Gate Posts

Original stone and brick boundary walls, including their 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.

New wooden fences or 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. Original gates should be repaired or replaced to the original design. New 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 etc, so as not to detract from the appearance of principal elevations.

### Shop fronts and signboards

Early shop fronts contribute greatly to the character of the area. Every effort should be made to retain the remaining features of original shop fronts including fascia boards. Owners wishing to renew or upgrade existing signboards or erect new ones must obtain any necessary advertisement consents before any changes are carried out.

### Verandahs

Consent will not be granted for the removal of cast iron verandahs. They should have a painted finish and where there is scope for advertising, it should be in a traditional sign-written style. Glazing should be repaired with Georgian wired glass.

### 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.

### Website and Email:

[www.sefton.gov.uk/planning](http://www.sefton.gov.uk/planning)  
[planning.department@sefton.gov.uk](mailto:planning.department@sefton.gov.uk)

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