

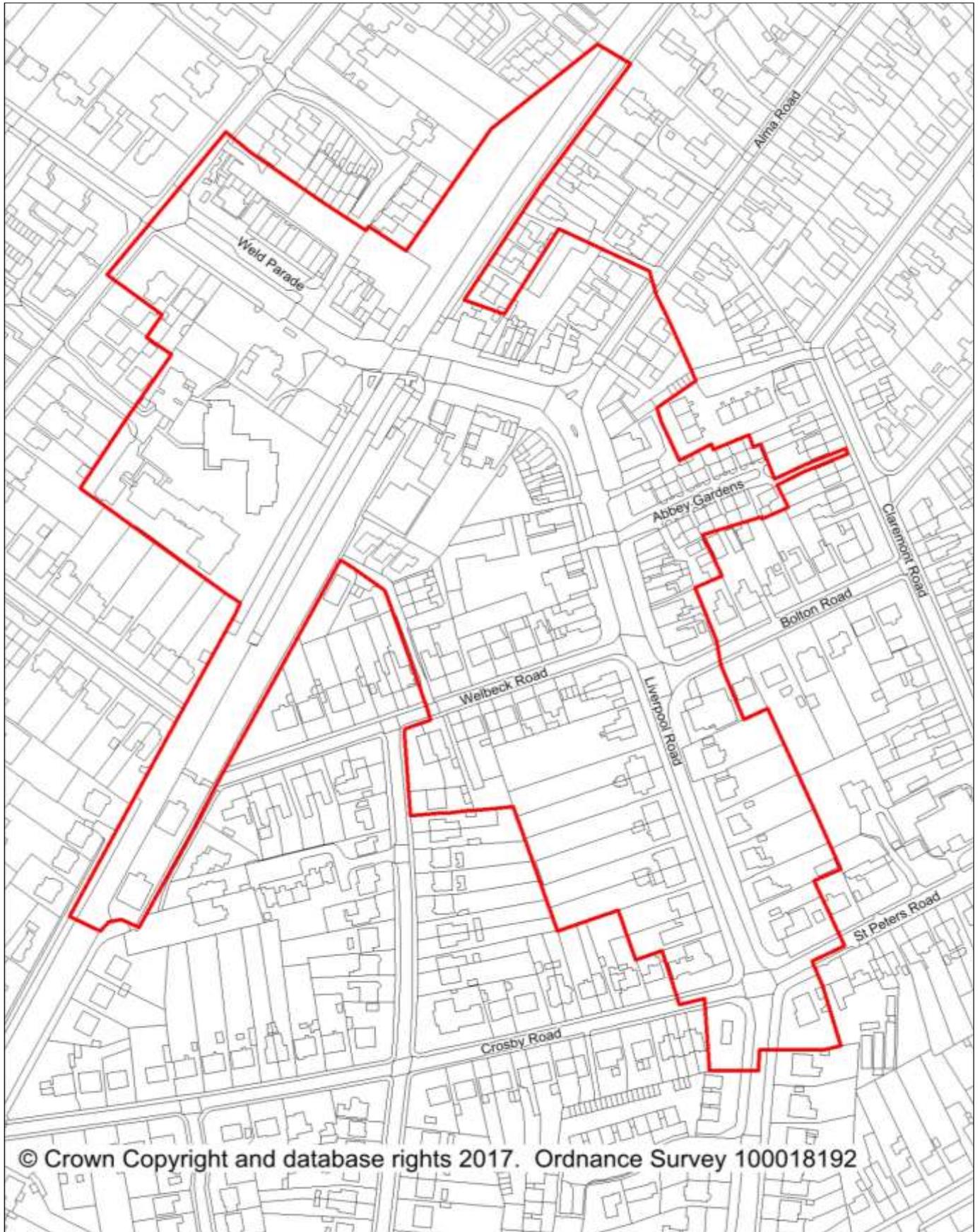
Birkdale Village
Conservation Area Appraisal
Adopted July 2011

OUTSIDE
SERVING

SANDWICHES
PANINIS
PIES + PASTERIES
SALAD BOWLS
COLD DRINKS
COFFEE + TEA
OLIVES
HOMECOOKED
HAM
TURKEY
BEEF

This Conservation Area Appraisal was prepared by Sefton Council in 2010 and amended following public consultation during March 2011 and was adopted by Sefton Council on 7th July 2011

This Conservation Area appraisal was prepared by Sefton Council in 2010 and amended following public consultation during March 2011 and was fully adopted including the suggested boundary changes shown below by Sefton Council on 7th July 2011. For more reasoning on boundary changes please see Section 7.0



BIRKDALE VILLAGE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

CONTENTS	PAGE
PREFACE	5
LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND	5
POLICY FRAMEWORK	5
HOW STATUS AFFECTS PLANNING DECISIONS	6
NEED FOR AN APPRAISAL	6
1 INTRODUCTION	7
1.1 BACKGROUND	7
1.2 SCOPE AND STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY	7
1.3 EXTENT OF THE CONSERVATION AREA	8
1.4 SURVEY	9
2 LOCATION AND CONTEXT	9
2.1 LOCATION	9
2.2 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY	10
2.3 USES AND GENERAL CONDITION	10
2.4 HISTORIC CONTEXT	10
3 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT	12
3.1 EARLY HISTORY AND ORIGINS	12
3.2 DEVELOPMENT	12
3.3 ARCHAEOLOGY	19
4 SPATIAL ANALYSIS.....	20
4.1 SETTING AND RELATIONSHIP WITH SURROUNDING AREA	20
4.2 ROUTES	20
4.3 KEY VIEWS WITHIN THE CONSERVATION AREAS.....	22
4.4 GREEN SPACES AND PLANTING	25
4.4.1 <i>Abbey Gardens</i>	25
4.4.2 <i>Street Trees</i>	25
4.4.3 <i>Front and Rear Gardens</i>	26
5 TOWNSCAPE OVERVIEW	28
5.1 GRAIN.....	28
5.1.1 <i>Plot characteristics</i>	28
5.1.2 <i>Spacing</i>	31
5.1.3 <i>Building lines</i>	32
5.2 RHYTHM, REPETITION AND DIVERSITY	33
5.2.1 <i>Rhythm</i>	33
5.2.2 <i>Repetition and Diversity</i>	34
5.2.3 <i>Abbey Gardens</i>	35
5.2.4 <i>Welbeck Road</i>	35
5.2.5 <i>Liverpool Road</i>	37
5.2.6 <i>Commercial area</i>	38
5.3 FOCAL BUILDINGS AND FEATURES	39
5.3.1 <i>74 Liverpool Road</i>	39
5.3.2 <i>Banks</i>	39
5.3.3 <i>Verandahs</i>	40
5.3.4 <i>Signal box</i>	40
5.3.5 <i>Station</i>	40
5.3.6 <i>Spinning Wheel</i>	41
5.3.7 <i>Spar supermarket, 21-23 Liverpool Road</i>	41
5.4 CONTRIBUTIONS OF BUILDINGS.....	42

6 ARCHITECTURE MATERIALS AND DETAILS	43
6.1 RESIDENTIAL	43
6.1.1 Victorian Villas.....	43
6.1.2 Edwardian Houses.....	44
6.1.3 Roofs.....	44
6.1.4 Gables.....	45
6.1.5 Elevational Treatments.....	46
6.1.6 Windows.....	47
6.1.7 Doors	48
6.1.8 Boundaries.....	50
6.2 LATE VICTORIAN/EDWARDIAN COMMERCIAL	52
6.2.1 Roofs.....	52
6.2.2 Gables.....	52
6.2.3 Dormer Windows.....	53
6.2.4 Windows.....	54
6.2.5 Doors	55
6.2.6 Elevational Treatments.....	55
6.2.7 Shopfronts.....	56
6.2.8 Verandahs.....	58
6.2.9 Signage	58
6.3 MID-TO-LATE 20TH CENTURY	59
6.4 STREETScape FEATURES	61
6.4.1 Surfaces	61
6.4.2 Street name signage.....	61
6.4.3 Street Furniture	62
7 NEGATIVE FACTORS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCEMENT	63
7.1 NEGATIVE FACTORS	63
7.1.1 Losses from the townscape	63
7.1.2 Poor quality / ill-considered later 20th C alterations to buildings.....	63
7.1.3 Shopfronts.....	65
7.1.4 Verandahs.....	66
7.1.5 Green spaces and planting	66
7.1.6 Unsympathetic new-build and extensions.....	66
7.1.7 Streetscape.....	67
7.2 OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCEMENT	67
7.2.1 Alterations to residential properties	67
7.2.2 Shopfronts & Signage.....	68
7.2.3 Trees	69
7.2.4 Street works	69
7.3 CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARIES	69
7.3.1 Designated Boundaries.....	69
7.3.2 Suggested boundary amendments.....	70

LIST OF PLANS

PLAN 1 CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY	8
PLAN 2 LOCATION OF CONSERVATION AREA	9
PLAN 3 CONSERVATION CONTEXT	11
PLAN 4 1845 OS PLAN	13
PLAN 5 APPROXIMATE AGE OF BUILDINGS	18
PLAN 6 HIERARCHY OF ROUTES	21
PLAN 7 KEY VIEWS	24
PLAN 8 AERIAL VIEW OF THE CONSERVATION AREA	27
PLAN 9 ORIGINAL RESIDENTIAL PLOTS WITHIN COMMERCIAL AREA	29
PLAN 10 LIVERPOOL ROAD VILLAS GRAIN	30
PLAN 11 WELBECK ROAD AND ABBEY GARDENS GRAIN.....	30
PLAN 12 BUILDING GROUPS	38

PLAN 13 CONTRIBUTIONS OF BUILDINGS42
PLAN 14 HISTORIC SHOP FRONTS57
PLAN 15 PROPOSED ALTERATIONS TO EXISTING CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY72
"
"
"

APPENDICES

- "
"
A. HENRY BANKES MAP 1736
B. YATES MAP 1786
C. 1845 OS
D. 1868 JOHNSON AND GREEN PLAN (FOSTER)
E. 1893 OS
F. 1933 OS
G. 1927 OS
H. SCHEDULE OF AMENDMENTS

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PREFACE

LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

Since the 1967 Civic Amenities Act local authorities have been empowered to designate Conservation Areas. 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 within its borders.

POLICY FRAMEWORK

The content of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is supported by national Planning Policy Statement (PPS5): Planning for the Historic Environment.

The principles within PPS 5 are further supported by Sefton Council's Conservation policies contained within its 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.

Local authorities have a duty to review, from time to time, their areas 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 preserve or enhance the character and appearance of its Conservation Areas and do not result in any serious loss of character or features.

Planning legislation supports the local authority in this by increasing its powers of 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 deciding 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. This should then underpin local policies for the area's protection. Such a definition requires a thorough appraisal of the area to assess the contribution of each element (e.g. buildings, boundaries, trees, surfaces, etc.) to the area's overall character.

Whilst this appraisal aims to identify the essential elements which give this conservation 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 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Designation as a Conservation Area provides the Local Planning Authority with additional powers to protect and enhance the area's special characteristics through the planning system.

The purpose of this document is to clarify the factors that individually and collectively contribute to the particular character of the Conservation Area

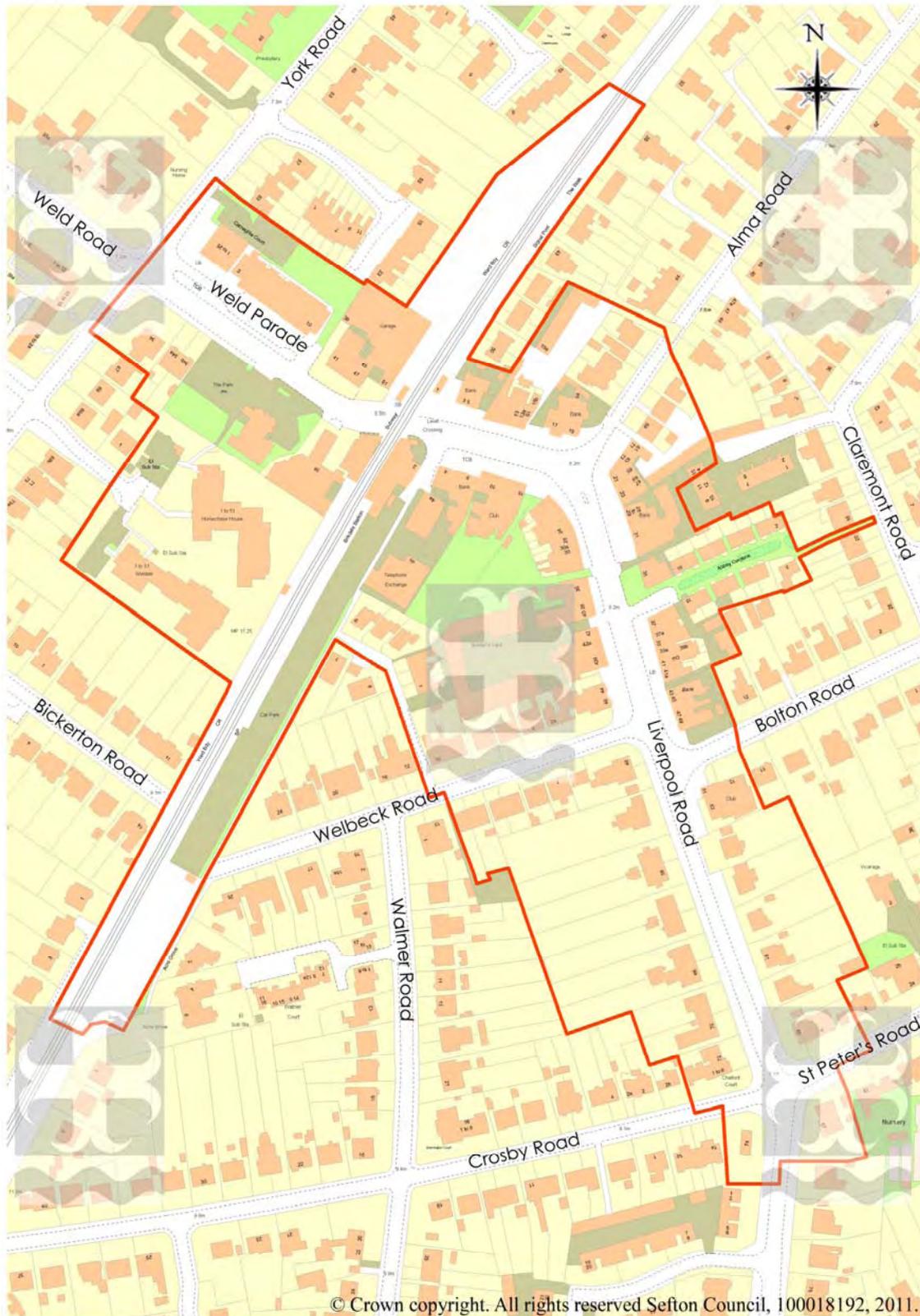
1.2 SCOPE AND STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

The scope and structure of this Conservation Area Appraisal is based on the guidelines published by English Heritage in 2006. Broadly these cover

- Location and setting
- Historic development and archaeology
- Spatial analysis
- Character analysis
- Character areas
- Activities/uses
- Architectural and historic qualities
- Local details and materials
- Issues
- Negative factors
- Opportunities

This appraisal represents a factual and objective analysis. The omission of any particular building, feature or space should not be taken to imply that it is of no interest. The appraisal concludes with recommendations for amendments to the Conservation Area boundary.

1.3 EXTENT OF THE CONSERVATION AREA



Plan 1 Conservation Area Boundary

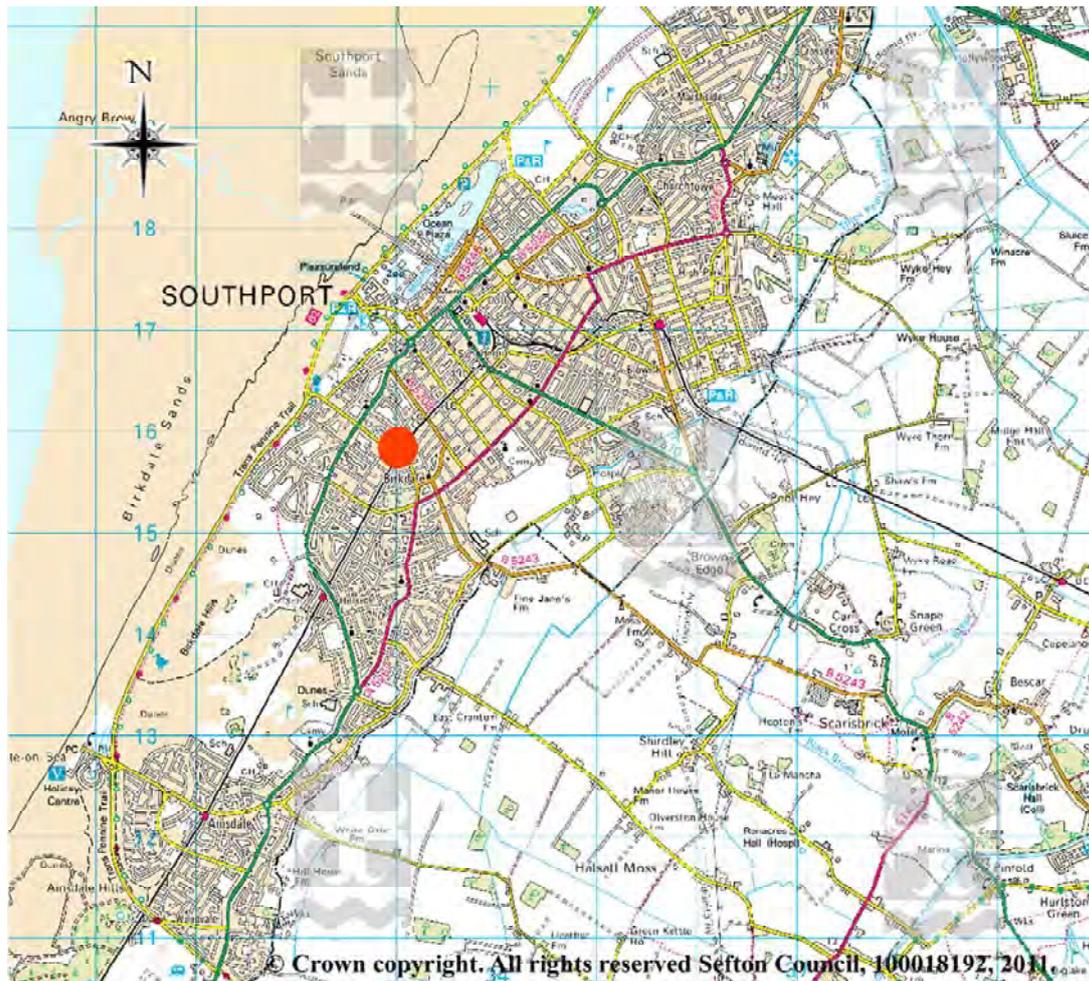
The conservation area was designated on 28th October 1981. The current boundary is shown on the plan above.

1.4 SURVEY

Surveys of the conservation area were carried out between summer and winter 2009, with supplementary visits through 2010. The area was visited at different times of day in order to gain the fullest understanding of the area.

The study area extends slightly beyond the boundaries of the currently defined area in order to consider whether any extension to the area would be desirable.

2 LOCATION AND CONTEXT



Plan 2 Location of Conservation Area

2.1 LOCATION

The conservation area is located approximately 1 mile to the south of Southport Town Centre and 1 mile inland from the coastline. It is situated on the Liverpool-Southport railway line.

The Conservation area covers the vibrant local centre of Birkdale village and residential properties nearby. It is on the Merseyrail rail network, with Birkdale Station situated within the conservation area.

2.2 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

The land is flat, situated approx 15-20m above sea level. The area is thought to be formed of blown sand and alluvium on an underlying bed of sandstone.

2.3 USES AND GENERAL CONDITION

The village is characterised by a mix of eateries, retail and business uses which mainly front onto Weld Road and Liverpool Road. The roads off these streets are mainly residential.

Some businesses that do not include retail frontages are located to the rear of the retail units on backland sites.

The condition of buildings overall is fair, although some, particularly retail premises and verandas, would benefit from some general maintenance.

2.4 HISTORIC CONTEXT

There is a Grade II* listed cottage at 74 Liverpool Road dating from the 16th/17th Century which reveals the form that early houses in the locality would have taken. It is thatched with cruck frame construction.

Other than this property, the pre-Victorian form of the area in terms of buildings, routes and field patterns is almost wholly lost.

Birkdale developed relatively independently of its Southport neighbour. They were not joined administratively until the 20th Century. Both of these areas however had high-class aspirations, and Southport today is graced by a legacy of high quality and spacious Victorian and Edwardian architecture. Given the high quality of buildings and attention to detail that the forefathers of the town demanded, several areas in the locality have been designated as conservation areas and there are a high concentration of listed buildings.



Plan 3 Conservation Context

3 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

3.1 EARLY HISTORY AND ORIGINS

The Domesday book records the area as 'Erengermeles' held by Wibart and valued at 8 shillings. Later it became Argarmeols. The early history of the area is tied to Ainsdale, which also formed part of Argarmeols. The name 'Birkdale' is believed to derive from a corruption of Scandinavian terms 'Birki' meaning 'Birch copse' and 'Dalr' meaning 'dale'. The earliest recording of this name was c1200 in the chartulary of Cockersand Abbey.

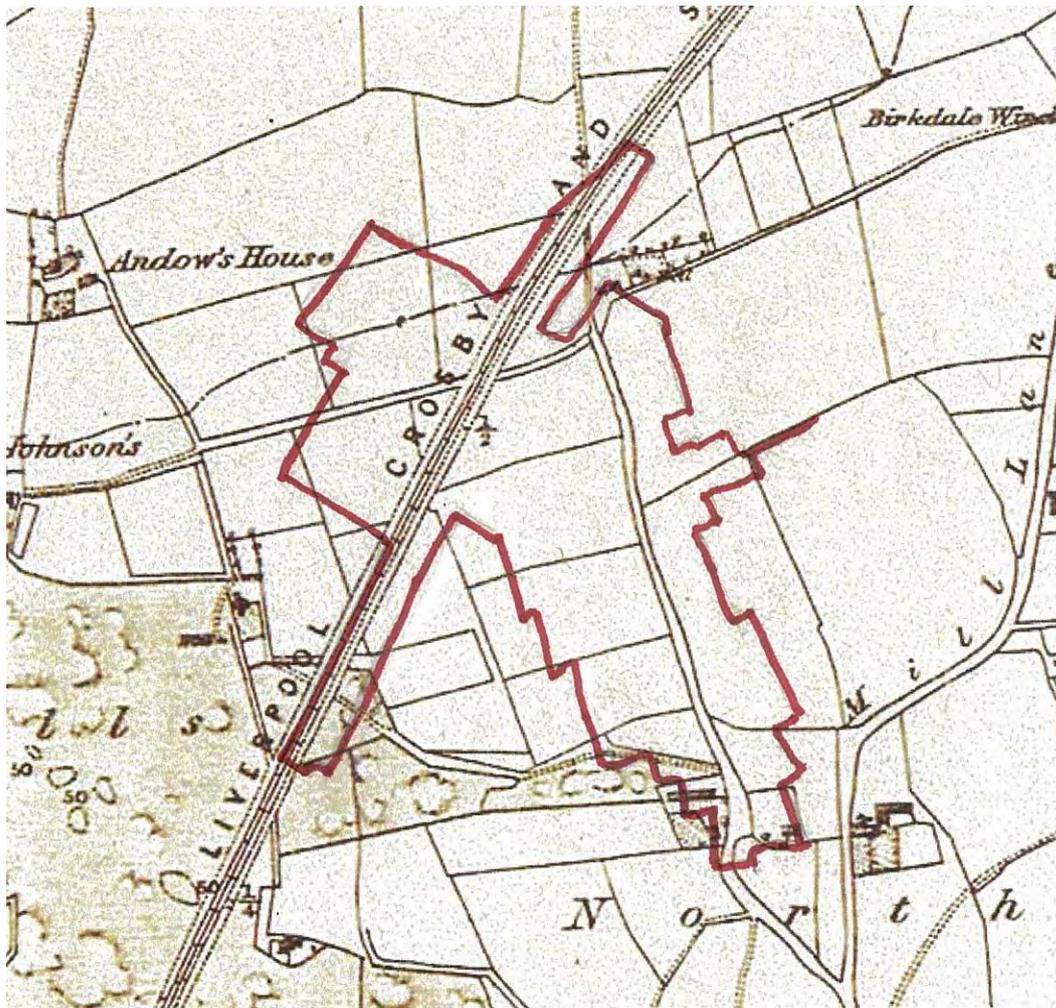
The coastline in the vicinity of Birkdale has been changeable for hundreds of years and records indicate that the lands were marshy, sparsely populated and a portion was reputedly destroyed by the sea washing inland c1400. It is difficult to piece together the early history of the area owing to a combination of boundary disputes and natural disaster. In 1632 the lands, or perhaps what remained of them, were acquired by Robert Blundell of Ince.

Until its development, following the coming of the railways in the mid-Victorian period Birkdale existed as a very sparsely populated area. Historically farming and fishing were probably the basis for the local economy.

3.2 DEVELOPMENT

The population of Birkdale rose slowly from around 150 in the late 17th Century to 600-700 in 1848. It is thought that most buildings up to this time were modest in character with thatched roofs. The cottage at 74 Liverpool Road is believed to be the sole local survivor of the pre-Victorian era, dating from the 16th/17th Century.

The plan of 1845 (on following page) illustrates the sparseness of development in the area soon after the building of the railway. The structure next to the railway was Pye's Farm. No traces of this building remain but the original entryway remains in evidence between 48 and 50 Alma Road.



1845 OS plan reproduced from Sefton Council's Archives

Plan 4 1845 OS Plan

The land continued in the ownership of the Blundells until 1837 when the lands passed 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. The architects Reade and Goodison drew up plans for Birkdale Park c1848 on land formerly known as Aindow's Hills.

The original Birkdale station was south of the present station, on an area which had formerly been Birkdale Common. The station was moved to its current location in 1851 to serve Birkdale Park more easily.

Growth in the area of the new station was slow. The Park Hotel was constructed in 1859. The 1868 Johnson and Green Plan (see Appendix D) shows that only two houses had been constructed on Weld Road by 1868¹ and the area was at the

¹ Foster, H. p 42

extremities of Birkdale's development. The Park Hotel was used early on as a base for meetings relating to the estate.

The Southport Tramway Company built a terminus at Birkdale Station in 1873, this opened up links with central Southport and Churchtown beyond, improving the prospects for development of the area.

Charles Weld-Blundell inherited the Birkdale estate in 1887 and began his own plans for a residential estate, this time inland of the railway line. His initial plan included the building of a park and he offered land to the local board for this purpose, however the offer was declined. The estate eventually materialised on what had been curtilage land to Dinorwic House and was aimed at the middle classes, but the houses were not to be as grand as those at Birkdale Park. This estate is found to the south of the conservation area and bounded by Liverpool Road, Kew Road, Brighton Road and Bedford Road.

Birkdale Town Hall was built on Weld Road in 1871 and the area gained its own police station in 1891. A fire station in 1900 and Carnegie Library in 1904 were also constructed (see Fig 1).



Figure 1

Administratively Birkdale grew up independently of Southport, but Birkdale was dependent on both Southport and Ainsdale for a variety of services. Despite this it wasn't until 1912 that Birkdale and Ainsdale joined with Southport under the County Borough of Southport.

The concentration of civic buildings and railway station, together with the growing local population led to the increasing importance of the Birkdale Village area as a focus for businesses in the late Victorian and Edwardian period.

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

In 1893 Mr Joseph Mather requested permission from the Birkdale Local Board to construct 8 shops on the site of two houses - nos 10 & 12 Liverpool Road. Mr Mather proposed giving up the land fronting the shops to public use, in return for which the highway would be altered and maintained by the board during his residence. These shops are still present today as Victoria Chambers, 18-34 Liverpool Road, which were built in 1894.

Following this the Birkdale Village area was quickly populated with a variety of shops opening including a druggist, butchers, wine and spirit merchant, baker etc. Banks, also keen to capitalise on the wealthy locals were quick to follow suit and a number were built on Liverpool Road between 1894-1911.



Figure 2 The postcard illustrates an early point in time during this phase of development. Note the garden walls either side of the picture

Political parties had also come to the area with the Liberals and the Conservatives each moving to clubhouses on Liverpool Road. These enterprises were all developed on land, which had formerly been occupied by spaciouly developed housing, similar to that found nearby. The development of the Conservative club at 12 Liverpool Road provides an excellent example of the shifting functions of the area. Plans submitted to the Birkdale Urban District Council in 1888/9 show the club taking over the site of earlier villas and the form this took (see Fig 3 & 4). In 1903, only fifteen years later, the opportunity to redevelop once again had arisen and the property underwent some fairly major changes to incorporate shops (see Fig 5).

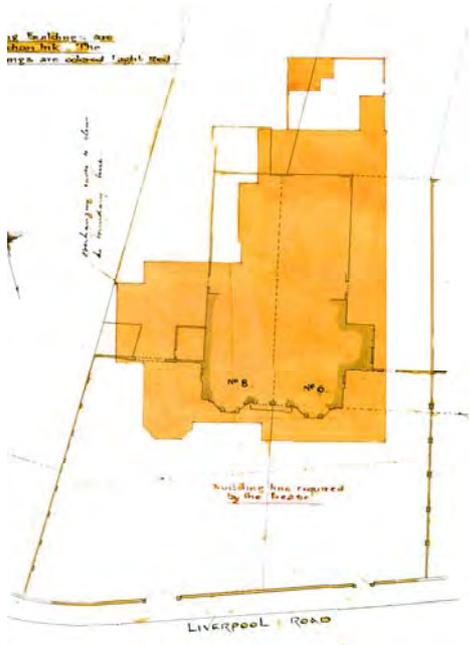


Figure 3 Site for Conservative Club 1888

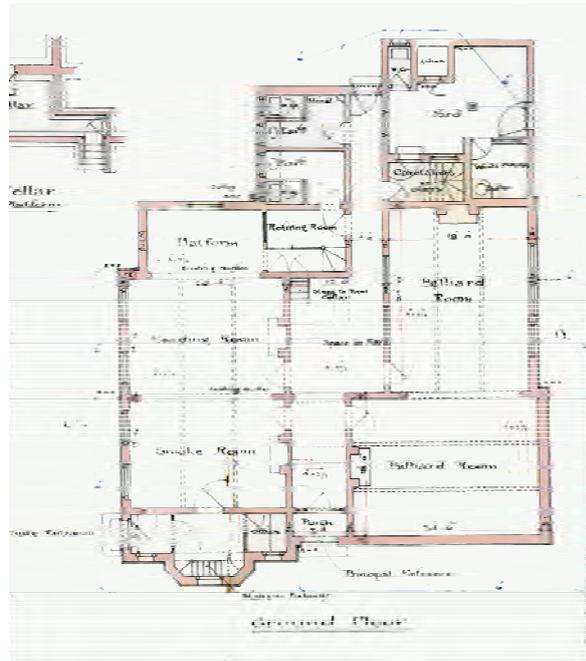


Figure 4 Conservative Club Ground floor 1889



Figure 5 Conservative Club Front Elevation plan 1903

This frequent rebuilding seems to have been a feature of the early centre; another example is clearly visible at 25-33 Liverpool Road, where two of the units have been demolished (making the building asymmetrical) to make way for a bank in 1908 (see Fig 6).

The conversion of the older dwellings to shops presented the opportunity to widen the road and pavements into the spaces where the gardens had been. Iron and glass verandahs were built on the new shops and trees planted in the broad

pavement. This pleasant pedestrian environment complemented the new businesses.

The verandahs in Birkdale Village remain one of its most attractive and distinctive features. The popularity of verandahs on Lord Street probably encouraged the construction of them in Birkdale. They are slightly later in date than those on Lord Street in Southport town centre and this can be seen in their designs which include Art Nouveau motifs.

The widening of the pavements in the developing commercial centre seems to have been mirrored with the reduction of front gardens to residential properties along Liverpool Road. There is one remaining property which has its original proportions at 55 Liverpool Road, which appears today as an anomaly jutting out into the pavement.

Following the frenzied pace of development at the turn of the 20th Century, there has been a period of relative stability. The impact of modernism in the mid-20th Century has however left its mark.

The block on the corner of Alma Road and Liverpool Road was demolished in the mid-1960s and the existing yellow brick building was built to replace it. This block is undistinguished and its design jars with those around it.

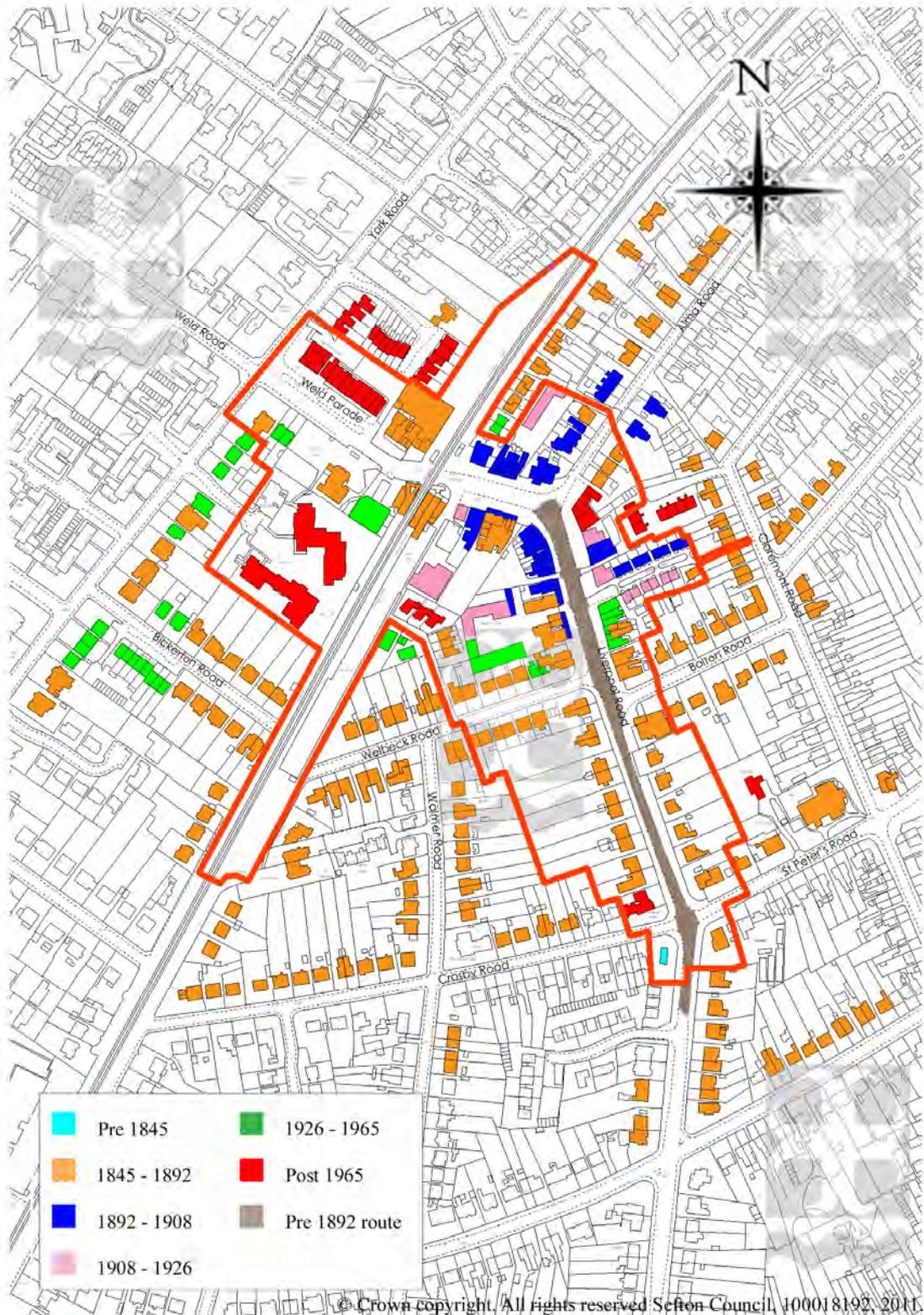


Figure 6 An early image of Birkdale Village. The majority of the buildings seen here have been demolished, making way for the yellow brick building at 21-23 Liverpool Road and the HSBC bank at 25-29 Liverpool Road.

Controversially the demolition of the Civic buildings was mooted in the 1960s and carried out in 1971. The buildings were replaced by shops, offices and flats.

In response to the changes being seen in the area the conservation area was eventually designated in 1981. Since that time, no further demolition of historic buildings has taken place.

Although the area has seen the very unfortunate loss of the Town Hall, library and police station and is generally not as complete as it might have been, Birkdale Village today remains a social and commercial hub and pays testament to the old civic centre of Birkdale.



Plan 5 Approximate Age of Buildings

3.3 ARCHAEOLOGY

Roman coins have been found in the Birkdale area. It is thought that a roman route may have passed through the area.

It should be noted, however, that lack of finds generally indicates a lack of investigation, rather than a lack of archaeological/historical interest.

4 SPATIAL ANALYSIS

4.1 SETTING AND RELATIONSHIP WITH SURROUNDING AREA

Birkdale is a large and popular residential suburb of Southport adjacent to the coast; it is well connected to the town centre by car, rail and bus. The train line divides the area in two, running south west/north east.

The suburb consists of Victorian and Edwardian properties in landscaped grounds. On the whole the roads are straight, and on occasion follow lines of earlier field patterns, though this is not generally true of the locality. The earliest development was planned and spacious, but later the plan was abandoned and streets were set out on a more *ad hoc* basis. In a general sense, properties to the seaward side of the railway are generally grander and larger, with a gradual shift towards properties inland of the line being smaller and of lower status.

The conservation area sits centrally within the Birkdale suburb, with the railway line running through it.

4.2 ROUTES

The main routes are along Liverpool Road/Weld Road and St Peter's Road. Liverpool Road is where commercial properties are based and both carry through traffic and buses. Liverpool Road can become somewhat clogged during the day particularly adjacent commercial premises due to the on-street parking and also the level crossing.

All other routes within the conservation area are generally residential streets, carrying only local traffic, and these have been defined as secondary.

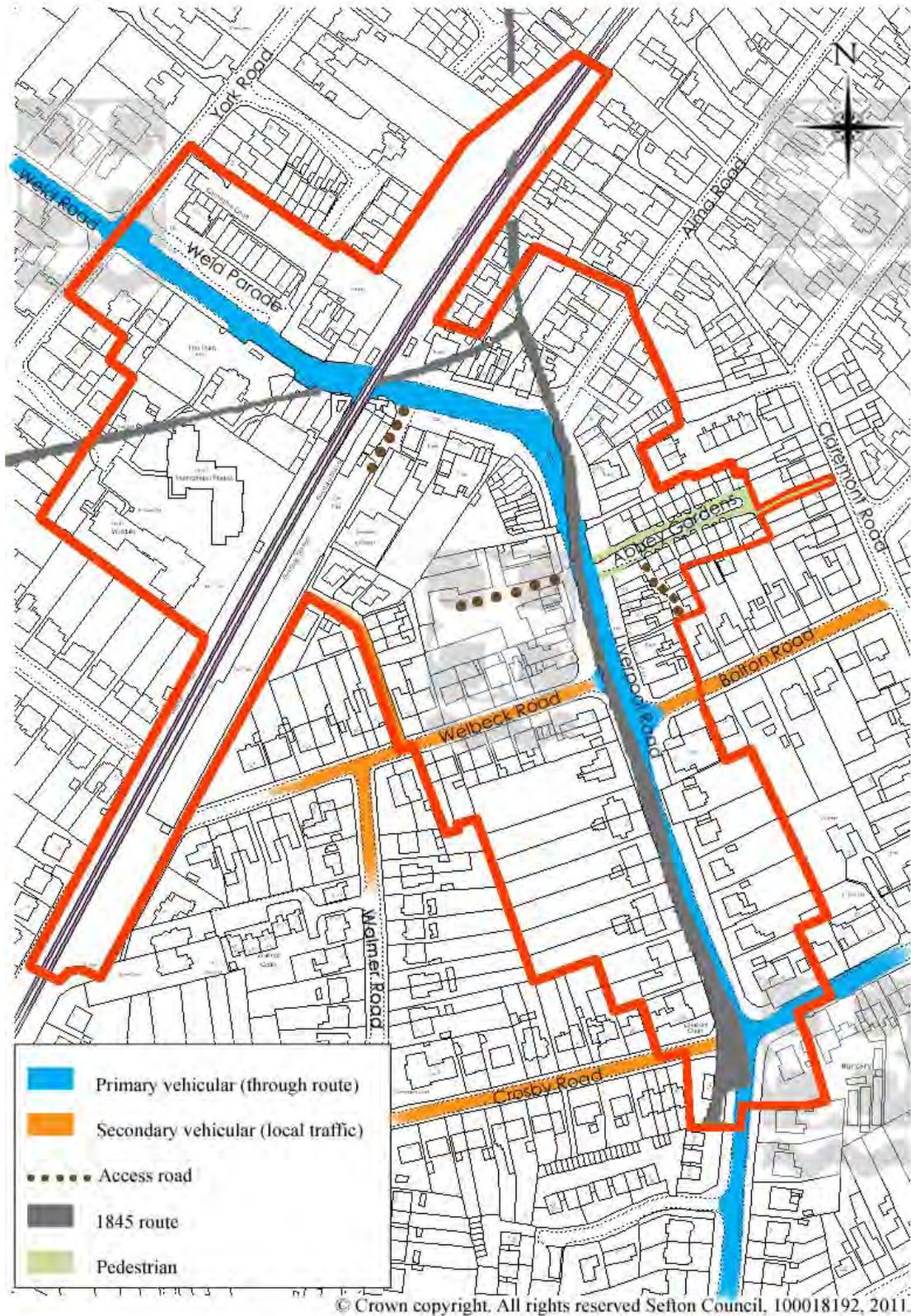
A number of minor access roads are found off Liverpool Road leading to backland business premises behind the shops.

A pedestrian route exists between Abbey Gardens and Claremont Road, this route was originally the access to no. 3 Abbey Gardens, which pre-dates the other properties in the cul-de-sac.

The train line is a major transport route through the area. The service runs every 15 minutes and carries large numbers of passengers towards either Southport or Liverpool.

Plan 6 shows the hierarchy of routes juxtaposed with the routes that existed prior to the development of the area c1850. This shows that the road structure as it exists now is quite different to how it was c1850. The route of Liverpool Road

however is in part based on the earlier road system and therefore this route has additional historic significance.



Plan 6 Hierarchy of Routes

4.3 KEY VIEWS WITHIN THE CONSERVATION AREAS

When travelling through Birkdale Village, a scene unfolds around the gentle curve of Liverpool Road. This very pleasing series of views is due to the attractive composition of road layout, the architecture, iron canopies and trees. The bank provides a particularly attractive focal point when travelling north along Liverpool Road.



Figure 7 View north along Liverpool Road

The view into Abbey Gardens from Liverpool Road is attractive and provides an alternative point of interest. The greenness of its setting and the regular development pattern provides visual interest.

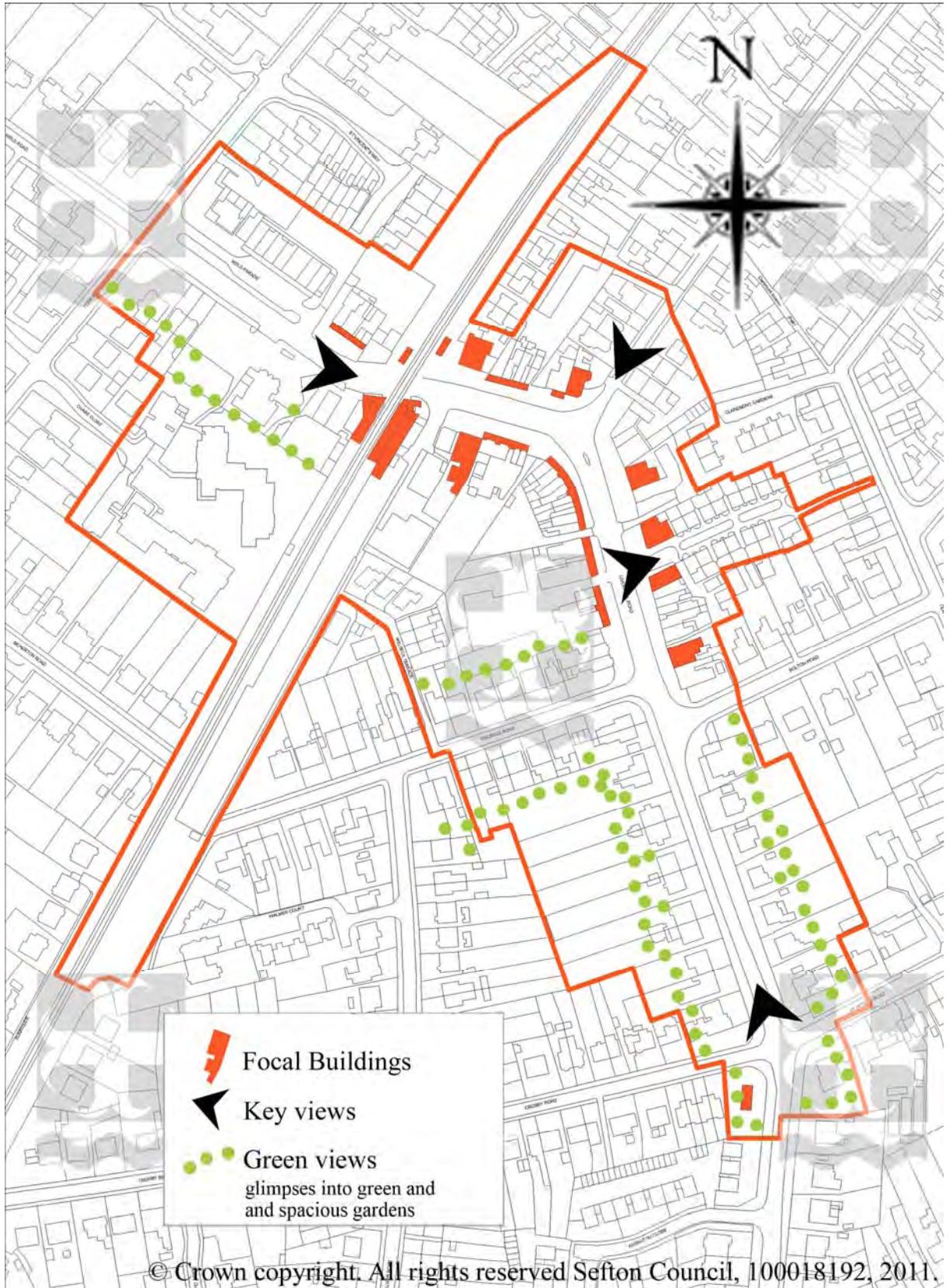
More distant views of the commercial properties and their tree lined setting can be appreciated along Alma Road, Liverpool Road and Weld Road.



Figure 8 View towards Liverpool Road from Alma Road

Many people experience the conservation area by passing through it on the train. The station itself presents an attractive gateway, as do the fleeting glimpses along Liverpool Road. However the majority of views seen from the train are towards the rear of properties and the business premises adjacent the station, the telephone exchange with its array of antennae and the swathe of car parking adjacent the station are also prominently visible. These do not currently present a very attractive appearance either through their neglected state or poor design quality.

Views between residential properties give a sense of spaciousness, owing to glimpses of mature greenery and trees, and more distant development. This gives a sense of spaciousness, which is critical to maintaining the grand character of the residential properties (see also 'Spacing' 5.1.2)



Plan 7 Key Views

4.4 GREEN SPACES AND PLANTING

4.4.1 *Abbey Gardens*

The planting in the centre of Abbey Gardens is the sole public formal planted space in the conservation area. The bedding which contains rose bushes (some potentially being survivors from the original scheme) is contemporary with the construction of the cul-de-sac and befits the Tudor Revival styling of the houses. In addition to the central strip of planting, low curved privet hedges are set to the front of each dwelling

The planting is of great value in establishing the character of the road as a quiet residential retreat so close to the village centre. The use of rose bushes and privet are typical of the planting used in the era and are complementary to the idealised country cottage style of the semis.



Figure 9 Planting in the centre of Abbey Gardens

4.4.2 *Street Trees*

The trees on Liverpool Road bring shade and greenness to the street scene, complementing the historic architecture. A report in the *Southport Visiter*² refers to the felling of many of the trees on Liverpool Road, due to the effects of Dutch Elm Disease. This explains why there are relatively few mature trees in the pavements.

² *Southport Visiter*, 6th November 1981

4.4.3 Front and Rear Gardens

The gardens of the residential properties are important in providing the area with 'greenness'. The original design of this class of housing purposefully positioned the dwellings in a soft landscaped setting and the front gardens were filled with a variety of shrubs such as hollies and rhododendrons to provide a degree of privacy. Some front gardens contain large and overgrown hollies, which are likely to be remnants of the original planting scheme.

Unfortunately a number of the front gardens have been paved over, in most cases where this has happened, trees remain on the perimeter. The loss of this landscaping detracts significantly from their appearance and reduces the sense of exclusivity that the planting once conferred.

The trees and green spaces surrounding the Park Hotel contribute to setting of the building and to the setting of Weld Parade in general.

Glimpses of mature rear gardens and trees can be gained between residential properties, which contribute to the sense of greenness of the area. Aerial views of the area give the strongest indication of the importance of greenery to the area, although the full effect of the green setting will only be fully appreciated by residents.



Plan 8 Aerial View of the Conservation Area

5 TOWNSCAPE OVERVIEW

The area was originally developed as a spacious residential suburb in the mid Victorian period, however its position next to the railway station led to commercial interests developing in the area. Plots nearest the train station were redeveloped – through either demolition and re-build, or conversion - and this has led to a distinctive variation in townscape.

As a consequence the architectural qualities of properties and their plot characteristics are determined largely by their use, the date in which the development was carried out and their position within the area.

Older residential properties tend to enjoy more spacious surroundings and be at a greater distance from the train station. By comparison those nearer the train station are generally in commercial use, slightly younger, have narrower plots with taller properties and directly front the pavement.

The plots nearest the train station, fronting onto Liverpool Road are tightly developed business premises and contain three and four storey buildings, surrounded by hard landscaping. A short section of the street on the curve is lined with cast iron verandahs projecting across the pavement which blurs the distinction between public and private. Trees on the pavement and the width of the street help greatly to soften this otherwise hard environment.

The remainder of the area is less tightly developed and is formed of two storey detached and semi-detached residential properties within soft landscaped gardens front and back, to varying degrees.

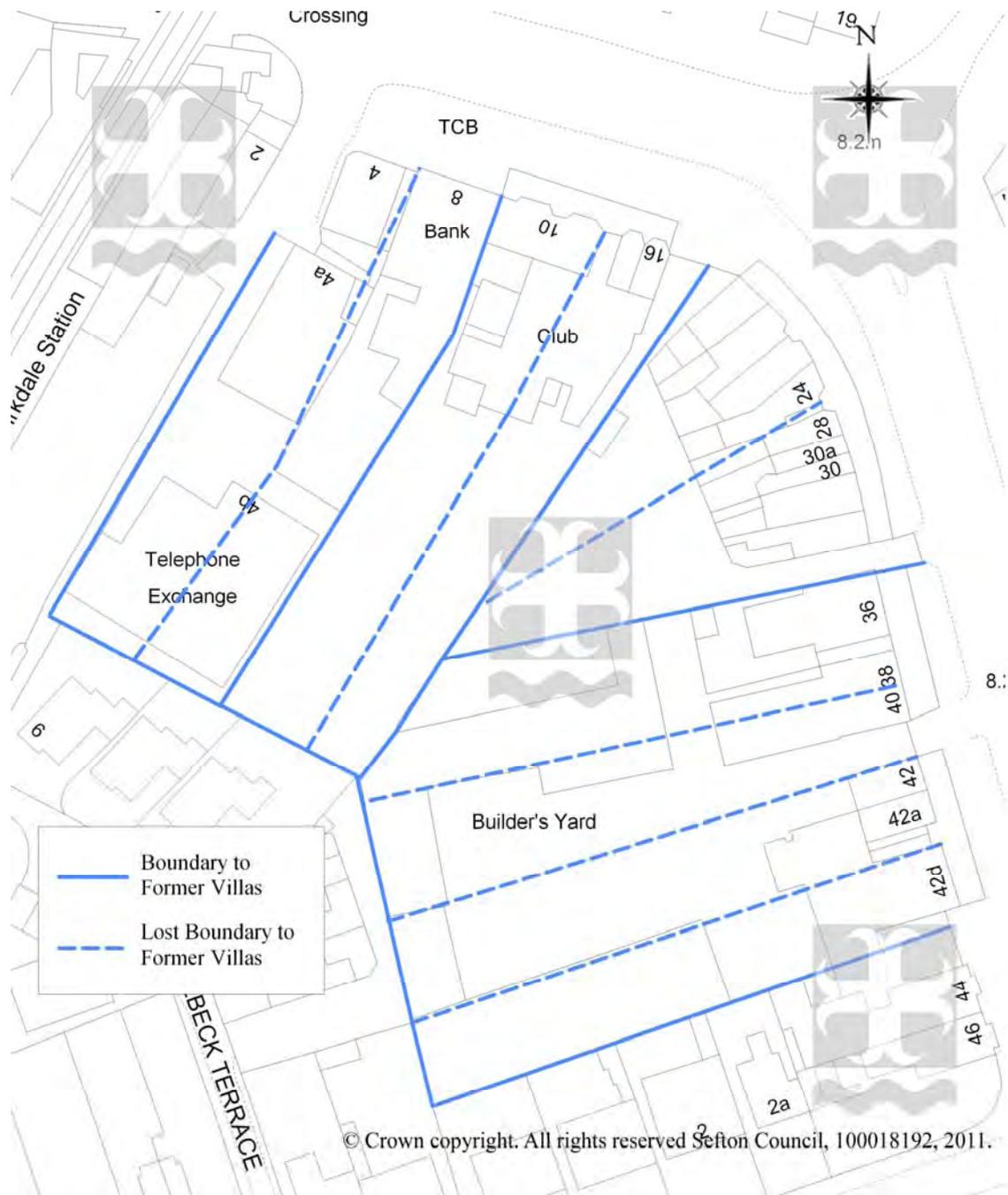
5.1 GRAIN

5.1.1 Plot characteristics

The plots nearest the train station fronting onto Liverpool Road are tightly developed. Several plots have been divided to create commercial backland sites. The buildings have also been extended leading to a situation where there is little open space left surrounding the buildings. Development is terraced and buildings are set directly on the footway.

Behind the shops is a much less dense arrangement of commercial buildings, built on what were previously gardens to large Victorian dwellings.

In some instances the original plots to the Villas are still discernable and original walls can remain as important physical remnants that reveal the history of the area's development.



Plan 9 Original Residential Plots in Commercial Area

Residential plots further away from the station, have much more spacious characteristics. They are long and narrow with properties set forward within them. This arrangement most likely came about as a result of keeping costs of road infrastructure low.

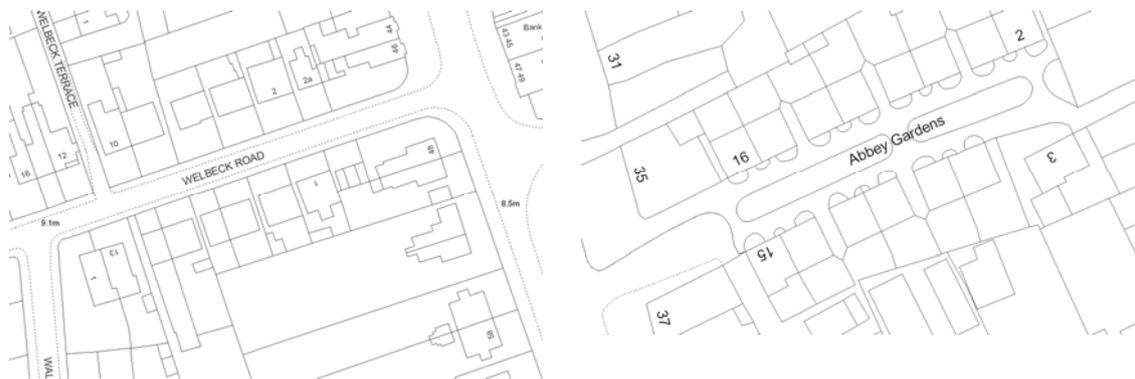
The residential stretch of Liverpool Road within the conservation area contains the oldest buildings (see Appendix D, 1868 Johnson & Green plan) and these have the most generous space standards. They demonstrate the form of development that pre-dated the shops and businesses in the commercial area. Only one of the properties, 55 Liverpool Road, actually retains its original plot dimensions.

The western side of Liverpool Road contains semi-detached villas (some now converted to flats). The plots here are particularly deep and narrow. The eastern side however is characterised by detached villas which have wider plots but are less deep.



Plan 10 Liverpool Road Villas Grain

Houses on Liverpool Road typically fill only 10% of their plots, while those in the streets leading off Liverpool Road are slightly less spacious but are still very generous by today's standards. Welbeck and Alma Roads for example generally see the properties filling approximately 25-30% of their plots, and Abbey Gardens properties, 50%.



Plan 11 Welbeck Road & Abbey Gardens Grain

5.1.2 Spacing

The spacing between residential properties is critical to the character of the area as a Victorian Suburb.

Spacing between dwellings on Liverpool Road is the most generous, with the width of the gap approaching the equivalent of the width of the properties. This allows views towards gardens to the rear, and the depth of this view adds to the perception of grandeur and spaciousness.



Figure 10 Generous spacing between villas on Liverpool Road

Elsewhere spacing is less generous. Welbeck Road contains large villas, but the spacing between them is disproportionately narrow. Fortunately glimpses of gardens to the rear can still be seen and this provides some sense of grandeur.



Figure 11 Tightly spaced dwellings on Welbeck Road

5.1.3 *Building lines*

Building lines are strongly defined within the conservation area and this is an important factor in establishing its character.

There are however instances where the building line is not quite as strong; these tend to be corner locations, the locations of older development (i.e. 74 Liverpool Road) and also incidences of more modern development.

Historically the building lines moved slightly forward when the residential development gave way to commercial. The difference in building lines can be most clearly seen by comparing the positions of 40 and 42 Liverpool Road. 40 Liverpool Road was originally a pair of houses which has undergone major changes including refacing and conversion to shops in the Edwardian era. 42 Liverpool Road has also been converted to shops, but the work undertaken was not as all encompassing and remains on the original building line.

The line of front gardens to residential properties further south along Liverpool Road was altered during the early 20th Century. With the sole exception of 55 Liverpool Road all of the gardens have been reduced in size. Front walls are built in matching designs suggesting that the alterations were all done at the same time most likely as part of a municipal scheme to allow for the road and pavements to be widened.



Figure 12 Original garden wall jutting out at 55 Liverpool Road



Figure 13 Attractive early 20th Century wall, high quality red brick with terracotta copings

5.2 RHYTHM, REPETITION AND DIVERSITY

The rhythms in built form, repetition of architectural motifs and features, and diversity in architectural styles come together in Birkdale Village to form a pleasing streetscape.

In terms of the residential properties, many share matching characteristics of age, style, plot, height, width, spacing, massing and materials. Semi-detached properties were designed to be symmetrical in appearance except for where they were constructed on a corner (i.e. where each fronts a different road). Some buildings share closer connections with repeated forms suggesting that they were built at the same time by the same individual, see Plan 12, p38 for locations.

There is more diversity within the commercial buildings, provided by a range of late Victorian/Edwardian styles being used and the wider range of materials. The common characteristics give a sense of unity and help define the distinctive character of the area.

5.2.1 *Rhythm*

The residential section of Liverpool Road is characterised on one side by similarly proportioned two storey semi-detached Victorian dwellings and the other side by similarly proportioned two storey detached Victorian dwellings. The rhythm created by their positioning within their plots and the spacing between them is a feature that unifies the street scene.

Abbey Gardens has a very strong rhythm of development, as the building forms and spacing on both side of the street are alike.

The verandahs create a strong rhythm on the seaward side of the street at ground floor level. Their uniform width, depth, regular spacing of columns and black and white colouring unifies the street scene.

There are similar rhythms to be found elsewhere in the conservation area, which also help to create unity in the streetscene.

5.2.2 *Repetition and Diversity*

The buildings which give the area its character date from the mid-Victorian period through to the early 20th Century. The area is home to examples of architectural styles which were fashionable during this period.

Residential properties are generally mid-Victorian with similarities in proportions, materials, joinery details and boundary treatments, with properties in the same road exhibiting closer similarities.



Figure 14

1. Slate Roof
2. Smooth Imperial sized Red Brick
3. Sash Windows
4. Timber Panelled Door
5. Brick Boundary Wall

Generally there is more diversity among the styles of later Victorian properties, which tend to be commercial properties located nearer to the railway station. Their diversity is however within limits as they share many common features such as the decorative use of timber boarding and pargetting, generous storey heights and matching materials etc.

5.2.3 *Abbey Gardens*

Abbey Gardens' properties are architecturally distinct from other residential properties in the conservation area. The buildings are all 2 storey, in a repeating matching Edwardian style. All are brick to the ground floor and render to the upper floors. Roofs are of typical Edwardian small plain clay red tiles. Each pair has a central half-timbered gable. Their later date of construction and virtually identical designs are a strong unifying feature of that cul-de-sac.

Localised changes to the detail of windows and doors (including the loss of stained glass) have undermined the strong character and integrity of the street. Changes made to windows have fortunately all seen the retention of their basic configuration. Alterations to doors have also been harmful, and sadly only a couple of original examples remain. Further loss of original details and finishes would be additionally detrimental.

No. 3 Abbey Gardens is a point of interest, being quite different in style. It provides relief and contrast to the otherwise repetitive theme. It pre-dates the remainder of the street and is quite petite in character and proportions. It was originally accessed solely from Claremont Road, along the pedestrian footway which still survives.



Figure 15 3 Abbey Gardens

5.2.4 *Welbeck Road*

Properties on the south side of Welbeck road share numerous identical forms and features, materials, storey heights etc. but do not exactly repeat by virtue of different mouldings being used on stonework and the properties being of different sizes.

For the semis the offset chimney would have been the only clue to their different sizes at the point of their construction. Over time additional changes have been made to the individual properties such as replacement windows, alterations to doors and porches and the application of render and paint, which undermines the sense of unity.

The detached properties at 1 & 3 Welbeck Road have more unique features than the semis, but likewise alterations have taken place to other features and detracted from their unity.

The repetition of form and features gives the streetscene a strong aesthetic and is important to its character. It is very likely that they would have shared the same builder.



Figure 16 5&7 Welbeck Road



9&11 Welbeck Road

Though these properties look symmetrical they are not in fact equally sized. The application of pebbledash to no. 11 has unfortunately shattered the illusion of symmetry originally created by the builder.



Figure 17 1 Welbeck Road



3 Welbeck Road

These houses share many features, however there are variations; one has a two storey bay and the other has a string course. Mouldings to stonework also vary.

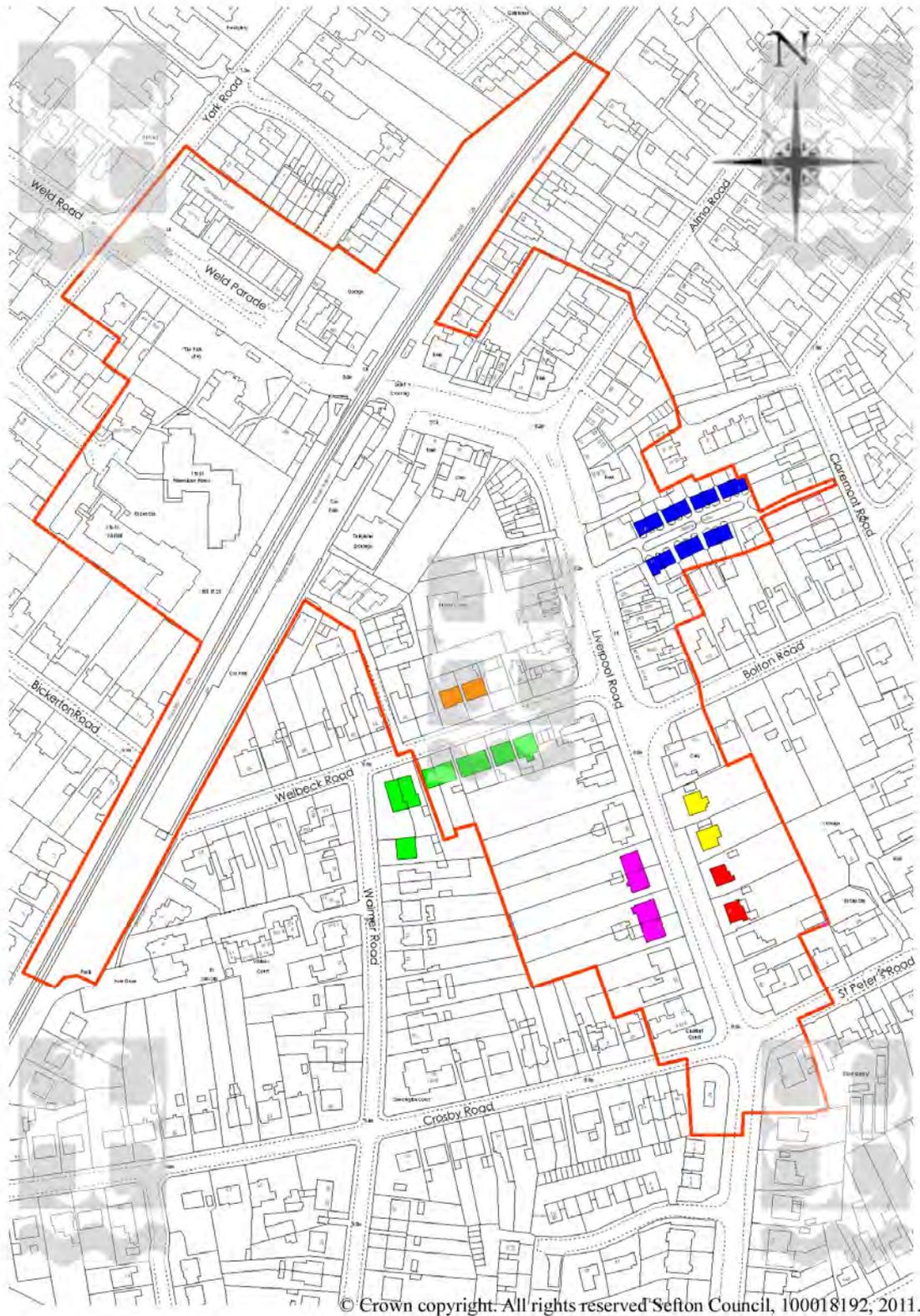
On the other side of Welbeck Road are two properties of different forms but they utilise some of the same architectural mouldings, suggesting that they are likely to have been built by the same person.

5.2.5 Liverpool Road

Residential properties on Liverpool Road are the earliest and most spaciouly developed properties in the conservation area.

There are a number of small groups of buildings which share distinctive features or forms, and which at the point of construction would have been much more similar to each other in appearance than they are today.

Together with the more overt repetition, the dwellings are of similar age, proportions, are of relatively plain designs, use the same materials and would all originally have had timber windows of either sash or traditional casement style. There is variation, but this is within limits.



Plan 12 Building Groups

5.2.6 Commercial area

The Late Victorian commercial properties display a variety of architectural styling typical of the period and vary considerably in height, from single storey to 3 storey-plus-attics. Neo-Classical, Neo-Queen Anne, Flemish and Tudor/Mediaeval influences can all be seen. The variety of styles, perhaps

unsurprisingly, echoes that of Lord Street in Southport town centre and has led to Birkdale Village being affectionately termed “little Lord Street”.

Though there is more diversity in the architectural appearance of properties within the commercial area, there are similarities and common motifs which help to link the buildings together. Examples of this are the ‘Tudor’ style boarding at 10-34 (even) and 31-33 (odd) Liverpool Road and also the semis in Abbey Gardens. Pargetting can be seen on 18-34 Liverpool Road (even) and 3-5 Liverpool Road. Traditional properties have pitched roofs and generously proportioned storeys.

There is a notable sense of verticality within the commercial area, with buildings set within narrow plots. Architectural ornament emphasises verticality using features such as pilasters, chimneys and vertically oriented windows.

A limited palette of materials is found among the late Victorian/Edwardian commercial buildings including red brick, white render, sandstone, timber, terracotta, welsh slate and red clay tiles. The range of materials and the way in which they are employed (e.g. timber for shopfronts and windows, cast iron for verandahs etc.) is an important aspect of the area’s character.

5.3 FOCAL BUILDINGS AND FEATURES

5.3.1 74 Liverpool Road

This is a grade II* listed building at the most southerly point of the conservation area, thought to date from the 17th Century. The cottage is single storey, long and low with a cruck frame construction and thatched roof; it is markedly different in appearance from all the later development in Birkdale Village.



Figure 18

5.3.2 Banks

A number of banks were developed in Birkdale Village between the late Victorian period and the mid-20th Century. At one stage 7 banks were operating. Many of them are at key points in the townscape and were developed as single sites, in contrast to the shops, which were built as multiple units. Their architectural styles are varied and opulent and create interest in the streetscape.



Figure 19

5.3.3 *Verandahs*

Lord Street in Southport's town centre is famous for its Victorian/Edwardian cast iron canopies and this fashion is not limited to the central area. The canopies in Birkdale are later in date than those in Lord Street, and display art nouveau motifs. The verandahs are a highly attractive and unifying feature of the Birkdale Village area and a major determinant of local character.

5.3.4 *Signal box*

The traditional signal box is positioned very prominently next to the station and train line, it is no longer in use. Its unique appearance within the area makes this building a focal point.

5.3.5 *Station*

The station is a readily visible sign of the area's raison d'être. Its traditional Victorian appearance presents an attractive entrance point for those arriving by train. The timber and iron canopies have recently been refurbished.

The underpass is a particular feature deserving of mention which contains attractive decorative metalwork and timber constructional details which visually connect it to the railway buildings. Some alterations have taken place to the station recently which have been of more standard design.



Figure 20 Birkdale Station



Figure 21 Birkdale Station

5.3.6 *Spinning Wheel*

This was a structure built before the present station. The building was a typical brick railway house, but has altered substantially in its appearance through the addition of mock Tudor boarding and render.



Figure 22

5.3.7 *Spar supermarket, 21-23 Liverpool Road*

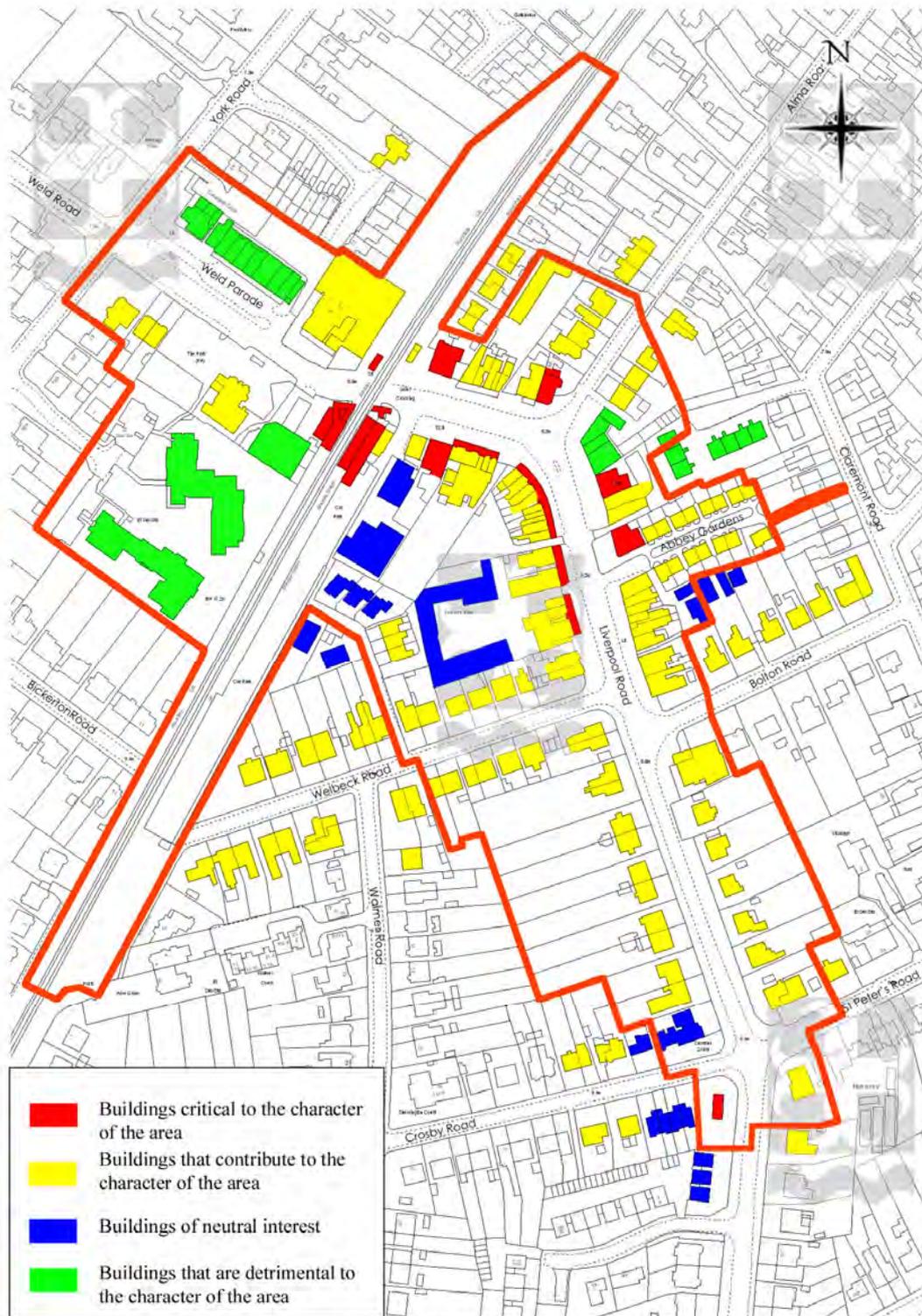
The yellow brick flat roofed building on the corner of Alma Road and Liverpool Road is a negative feature of the area. Its prominence is owing to the combination of its location and uncharacteristic design, which jars with its surroundings.



Figure 23

5.4 CONTRIBUTIONS OF BUILDINGS

Not all of the buildings in the conservation area contribute to its character; the plan below indicates the relative contribution of each building, outbuildings and structures have not been assessed for the purposes of this analysis, but this should not be taken to assume that they have no value.



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Plan 13 Contribution of Buildings

6 ARCHITECTURE MATERIALS AND DETAILS

The Conservation area is characterised by Victorian and Edwardian era properties. These periods produced a variety of architectural styles, which are represented in the conservation area.

Because the ages and styles of buildings vary, the features seen in one part of the area are not generally ‘transferable’ from one building to another. It is important to maintain the styling of the individual buildings to ensure that architecturally they retain their integrity.

One interesting feature of the area is the conversions, where a residential villa has been adapted for commercial use. These changes are very important to the area as they elucidate the historic development of the commercial area. They appear in a variety of forms and have usually involved refacing the building and the addition of extensions. Where a building is an early conversion it is important to retain features that represent its characteristics as both residential villa and commercial premises.

Below is a description of the variety of architectural styles and features to be found in the conservation area.

6.1 RESIDENTIAL

6.1.1 Victorian Villas

The residential Victorian villa properties in the conservation area date from c1860-1890 and their style is typical of this period.

At the point of construction of these dwellings, there were three main styles – Gothic, Italianate and Classical. Arguments for each style were abating by the late Victorian period and many builders were picking and choosing features according to their preference. Consequently the characteristics of the styles became watered down.

There are both gothic and Italianate forms visible within the conservation area. Features of each movement may appear on the same property.

Several of the villas appear to have been ‘modernised’ c1910 and display various Edwardian style add-ons. These early 20th Century alterations are interesting for what they represent. The growing commercial area, built in very modern styles at the turn of the 20th Century perhaps made the mid-Victorian villas look dated in comparison, and the Edwardian residents appear to have adapted their houses to keep them fashionable.



Figure 24 55 & 57 Liverpool Road. These houses were probably a symmetrical pair, but alterations early in the 20th Century make this less easy to discern.

6.1.2 Edwardian Houses

There are relatively few houses, which were constructed at this time and they are dotted around, as they were largely slotted into an already established area. Abbey Gardens (with the Exception of no. 3), 52 Alma Road and 34a and 34b fall into this category. These share very similar architectural characteristics, for example with red clay tiles on roofs, render and timber boarding to gables.

6.1.3 Roofs

With the exception of the Edwardian houses, roofs to residential properties were originally all covered in Welsh slate. Buildings have pitched roofs, most are hipped and are neither, shallow or steep. The Edwardian properties have red clay tile roofs.

It is interesting to note that in contrast to the main roof, roofs to bays and porches are often covered in red clay tile. It is likely that these were later additions to properties, possibly carried out at a similar time to the reconstruction of the garden walls (see 4.5.3 – Garden walls)



Figure 25

Some properties have retained decorative finial details and ridge cresting, these are attractive details very typical of the period of development.

Vergeboards have been variously altered throughout the area, there are some original examples remaining, but most have been replaced with inferior versions.

6.1.4 Gables

The characteristics of gables and roofs in the residential areas vary according to the particular design of the building. Some paired semis share a large central gable (i.e. 60/62 and 64/66 Liverpool Road). Detached properties often display a small central gable (e.g. 4 Welbeck Road). Where they exist, most are relatively plain but there are some interesting anomalies:

No 57 appears to have had a gable built or significantly altered during the Edwardian period. The gable is tile hung and incorporates casement windows. It is rather alien to the more restrained architecture of the remainder of the property but is notable for what it represents – the changing fashions in the area from Victorian to Edwardian.

No 67a Liverpool Road is an extension to no 67 built in the 1920s. It has a large gable which projects forward from the line of the original dwelling.

In Abbey Gardens, each pair of semis has an identical shared central gable with timber boarding and a terracotta finial. The repeated gable feature provides rhythm to the scene and is a strong facet of the character of this street.



a



b



c



d

Figure 26 Gables. The two shown in a & b were originally designed with these features. The examples shown in c & d are later additions.



Figure 27 Decorative gables in Abbey Gardens

6.1.5 Elevational Treatments

The only instances in which render is the original finish is on Edwardian era buildings such as Abbey Gardens and 52 Alma Road. Here it is roughcast render and used above ground floor level (see Fig 24).

All of the Victorian Villas are constructed of traditional imperial sized pressed red brick to prominent elevations. Typically Flemish bond has been used as it was regarded as the most decorative option. Brick used on side and rear elevations is of a less refined and darker appearance, and would have been cheaper.

Alterations to some properties have seen various modern treatments introduced including stone cladding, render and pebble dash. The application of alien materials to elevations has unbalanced pairs of semis and is an uncharacteristic addition. In some cases these treatments have completely obliterated architectural features.



Figure 28 Loss of detail and character owing to application of render

6.1.6 Windows

Properties display varying degrees of ornamentation around windows.

Most of the Victorian villas originally had vertical sash windows of a 1/1 or 2/2 arrangement. This form of window is typical of Victorian properties across the country and they are of great importance in establishing their character. Where sash windows are replaced with windows of a different design or material this has a marked effect on the appearance of the building as a whole and the result is inevitably detrimental. The window openings in the conservation area display segmental arched heads and some have feature keystones which in themselves are variously decorative.

All of the houses, with the exception of the Edwardian properties in Abbey Gardens entail bay windows of varying designs, usually only at ground floor. These are roofed in either lead, slate or clay tiles.



Figure 29 Feature keystone



Figure 30 Segmental arched head sash window



Figure 31 Ground floor canted bay



Figure 32 ground floor square bay window

Edwardian era residential properties (and Edwardian era alterations) often utilise timber casements and attractive leaded lights are more frequently in evidence.

The Abbey Gardens properties would likely have originally had unique stained glass panels within windows, which would have lent a degree of variation and individuality without affecting the uniformity. The designation report for the conservation area makes reference to this, however many windows have been removed and the evidence of this tradition is all but lost.



Figure 33

6.1.7

Doors

Many of the properties have recessed porches enclosed by double doors. This is indicative of the original status of the villas. Very high status villas of the time usually had projecting porches, while those lower down the hierarchy had recessed porches, such as those in evidence in Birkdale Village e.g. Welbeck Road.

Original doors do fortunately remain in some properties, though upvc doors, which do not adequately replicate the designs or depth of mouldings, are becoming prevalent.



Figure 34 Recessed porches



Figure 35 Enclosed Recessed Porch



Figure 36 No porch

6.1.8 Boundaries

Residential boundary walls play an important part in defining the character of Birkdale Village conservation area owing to their prominence. Their relatively uniform height (approximately 1-1.2m) and limited palette of materials lends a pleasing consistency to the streetscene.

Front walls on Liverpool Road are in red pressed brick with terracotta copings gate piers are also of brick with a terracotta capping. They are built in stretcher bond but with a single centralised course of alternating headers/stretchers. The walls were uniformly built, following a scheme to widen the road in the early 20th Century, though it is likely that this was a piecemeal exercise. Alterations to this style of garden wall have had a negative effect, particularly so in cases where it has been removed altogether.



Figure 37

There is one interesting exception, which is 55 Liverpool Road. This property retains its full size front garden and original Victorian boundary wall. This is an important remnant, which gives a clue as to what the original appearance of the street would have been before it developed into a commercial area.



Figure 38 Remnant of original Victorian Villa garden layout

Boundaries to residential properties elsewhere are more varied. Abbey Gardens boundaries are characterised by the use of privet hedging, though there have been alterations to this with two properties having railings. The property at number 3 Abbey Gardens would have originally been surrounded by iron railings leaded into the stone plinth, railings have recently been reinstated.



Figure 39 Privet hedging in Abbey Gardens

Boundaries within the remainder of the residential area are generally Victorian in origin and use brick, usually of a lower grade, surmounted by stone copings with gate piers which are sandstone and relatively plain and small in design. There are instances where these have unfortunately been altered or replaced altogether with a variety of materials and designs that serve to undermine the coherence of the street scene.

6.2 LATE VICTORIAN/EDWARDIAN COMMERCIAL

Properties in the commercial centre display typically late Victorian and Edwardian architectural styles. This period brought with it the domestic revival style with its nostalgic architectural trends. There was a desire to return to traditional ‘cottage’ styles and mediaeval forms. Different styles and features sit happily together in the centre. Interestingly many of the earlier Victorian villas, notably along Liverpool Road, seem to have been adapted with several displaying Edwardian ‘add-ons’.

6.2.1 Roofs

The many different forms of Victorian and Edwardian architecture have led to a pleasing and varied roofscape.

Roofs are generally of slate, with clay ridge tiles, and finials. Chimneys can be quite decorative, particularly on banks, and give an imposing and sumptuous impression. Several chimneys have been altered and reduced in height, which has detracted from the roofscape. The more decorative buildings also have elaborate details at parapet level.

6.2.2 Gables

Tudor style black and white boarding and render can be seen in evidence on gables. In true Tudor properties the timberwork is part of the structure, whereas the Victorian/Edwardian properties utilise the timberwork only decoratively.

Pargetting is also seen on gables in the conservation area and there are some attractive examples. This is a decorative form dating from the 17th Century which saw a revival in the late Victorian & Edwardian periods.



Figure 40 On 18-28 Liverpool Road, this tudor style black and white boarding is combined with pargetting.

Flemish style gables were popular as part of the Queen Anne revival. Features from this movement can be found on several buildings in the commercial area.



Figure 41



6.2.3 Dormer Windows

Dormer windows only appear on the purpose built commercial properties. Where they are set back from the eaves they are flat-roofed, but in some cases they are built into a gable in which instance they usually have a very elaborate Flemish or timbered gable as a surround.



Figure 42



6.2.4 Windows

There is a great variety in the detailed designs of windows within commercial premises. The specific designs are carefully considered in relation to the style of each building. The windows generally have been particularly designed as decorative elements of the façades and are key elements of architectural composition. Windows are recessed within the openings, which add to the modulation within facades.

Sash windows and traditionally designed casement windows are the norm displaying decorative joinery work. There is a notable theme whereby many windows are broken up into smaller panes using either glazing bars or leadwork; the use of stained glass also creates smaller elements within them. This trait is a result of much of the late Victorian/Edwardian styles of architecture being revivals of Jacobean, Tudor and Queen Anne architecture – which invariably used smaller panes in windows.

Where original windows have been replaced, they have invariably been replaced with inferior specimens. Changes to the designs of windows have resulted in an often underestimated and detrimental effect on the character of buildings. In particular the use of pvc windows and/or ‘stuck on’ bars cannot adequately replicate the appearance of traditionally constructed windows in the appropriate material.



Figure 43 The three casement windows on the lower section of the first floor have been altered from their original design. They would have been identical to the two original casement windows which still remain. The large panes are a much plainer and flatter solution; the lines of the window are less clean, with the opening section having narrower glazing



Figure 44 The leadwork was originally much more elaborately designed. Note also the peeling-off decoration and the reflections

6.2.5 Doors

Doors and doorways to the banks are highly decorative, with heavy carved stonework and wide doorways being typical. Quite a number of original doors have been lost and this has negatively affected historic character.

Doors to upper floor flats are recessed behind the level of the shopfronts which emphasises the shopfront's prominence in the streetscene. Doors are usually paired and where the recessed porch area is well proportioned this can include decorative tiling and joinery details.

6.2.6 Elevational Treatments

Pressed brick is also the most common building material used in the commercial properties; however other materials are also in evidence.

Stone is used on banks (though not exclusively) as this conveys a sense of importance, permanence and wealth.

In common with the Edwardian residential properties, several of the later Victorian/Edwardian commercial buildings also utilise roughcast render at first floor level, with brick at ground floor.

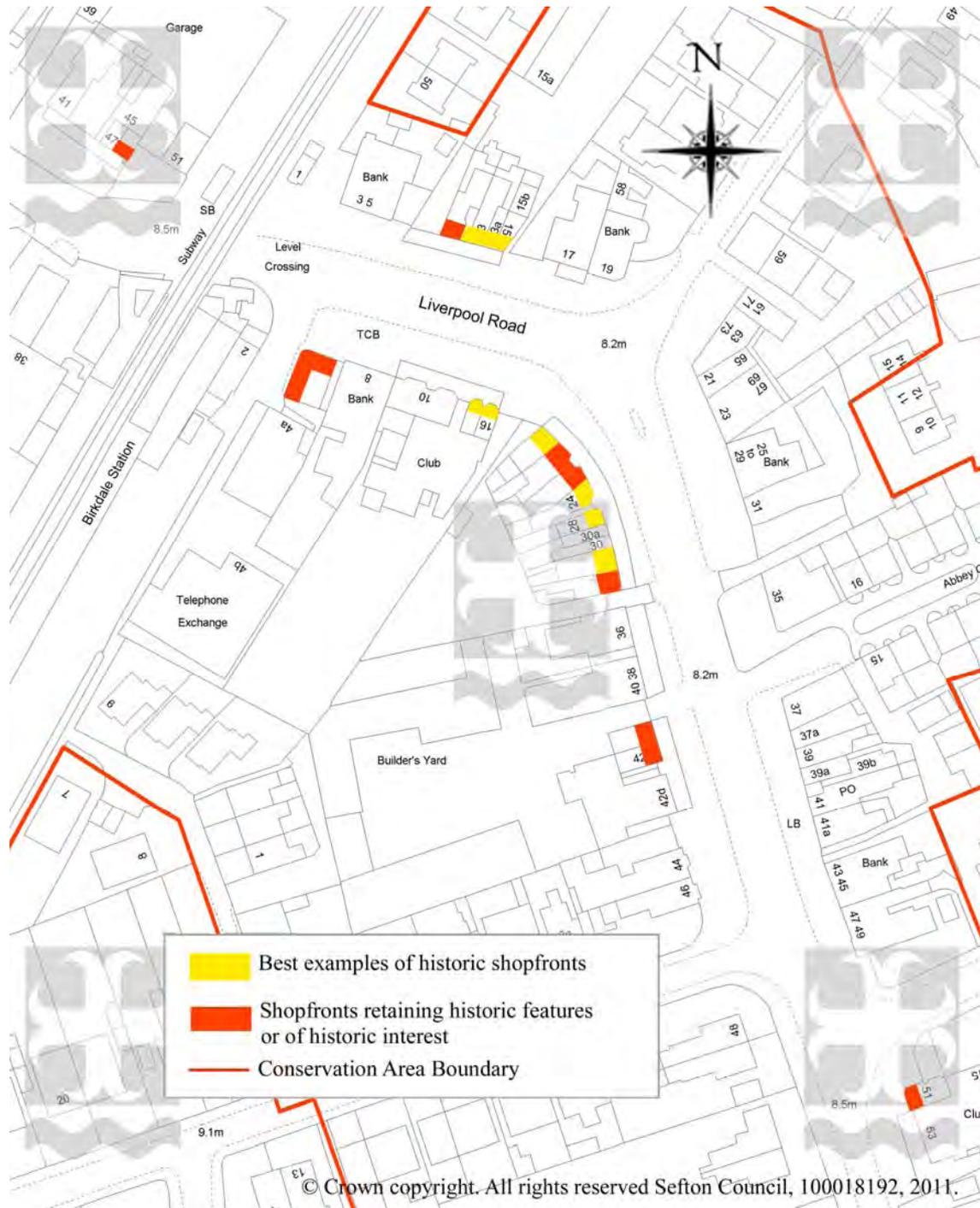
Render and paint has been applied to some properties (in part or in total) which were not originally designed to include this coating (for example 41-51 Weld Road). Where alien finishes have been applied this has been detrimental as it masks original details and undermines the architectural character of the building.

20th Century alterations to properties in the conservation area have brought with them alien materials, or seen traditional materials used inappropriately. Examples include the granite shopfront at 17 Liverpool Road, the use of render for the shopfront at 10 Liverpool Road and the yellow brick within 21 Liverpool Road

6.2.7 Shopfronts

There are a number of historic shopfronts still in evidence. In some cases the shopfronts have been adapted in some way or simplistically repaired. These all have a high quality appearance and match the age and architectural detail of the building into which they are installed. They are of great importance to the character of the conservation area. Newer shopfronts may conceal fragments of original frontages.

Many of the shopfronts are accessed via a step. Some shops have sought to improve accessibility by adding external ramps on the pavement. The ramps are variously designed, but none are successful in integrating into the streetscape. Fortunately the pavements are quite wide, but nonetheless they do detract both physically and visually from the public realm.



Plan 14 Historic Shop fronts

Often newer shopfronts have not been designed in sympathy with the rest of the building or its neighbours. Overlarge fascias, inappropriate materials, flat frontages and inappropriate canopies are in evidence.

Shopfronts constructed in the fashionable styles of the later 20th century such as 10-14 Liverpool Road and 17 Liverpool Road look particularly alien as they disregard traditional 'rules'.

6.2.8 Verandahs

The cast iron and glass verandahs are similar to those in Lord Street, but they are slightly later in date and have art nouveau motifs. All are the same width and depth and have similarly proportioned constituent parts.

Some verandahs are designed to include fascias for signage. They benefit from a uniform colour scheme of black with white painted detailing. A colour scheme is also in evidence for the verandah signage, where black, white and gold, with some limited use of colour is discernable.

The uniformity in their appearance helps to unify the streetscape and enhances the appearance of the commercial centre.

6.2.9 Signage

Signage on fascias and verandahs provides interest and liveliness in the streetscene.

Traditional signwritten fascia boards of proportions which fit in with the architectural character of buildings - usually no more than 1/5th of the depth of the shopfront and often less - are a positive feature of the area.

Quite a number of properties have opted for lettering applied to the glazing. This is an attractive and historically appropriate solution, particularly where the lettering is of a traditional typeface.

However there are some cases where signage is visibly detrimental to the conservation area. Signage can be overlarge, bulky, use non-traditional materials and finishes, obscure architectural details, and in some cases be positioned outside of purpose designed fascias. Signage which is poorly located and designed is detrimental to the character of the area.



Figure 45 poorly located, overlarge and excessive signage



Figure 46 Signage obscures attractive shopfront details

Some properties bear the remnants of former occupants. These give a sense of history and also evolution of the area. These remnants are often attractive such as at 13 Liverpool Road where the shopfront and the mosaic floor to the recessed door include the signage of the Maypole Dairy Co. Ltd. The same block of buildings includes the fading remnants of a painted sign on the gable.

6.3 MID-TO-LATE 20TH CENTURY

Properties constructed within this period contrast starkly with their historic context. The more varied use of materials, the proportions of architectural features and the scale of buildings serve to stand them apart from the Victorian/Edwardian buildings.

The 1960s/70s properties are generally of a modernist appearance, with no ornamentation and flat roofs. Where these properties are grouped together, such as that at Weld Parade and Carnegie Court, the buildings look out of context but create a unity of their own. However where they stand alone such as at 61 Alma Road-21 Liverpool Road, they look isolated and alien in their surroundings.

Where modern buildings have been constructed, but with pitched roofs, such as 2a Welbeck Road and 72 Liverpool Road, the contrast is softened. Nevertheless, the materials used, the comparably small scale of storeys, proportions of architectural features and the lack of ornamentation still leaves them appearing out of context.



Figure 47 yellow brick, flat roof, square windows set flush with front elevation wall

Shopfronts within modern buildings are flush fronted and together with the flat roofs this results in a plain and ‘boxy’ appearance. The Weld Parade buildings have included a verandah, no doubt a nod to the traditional appearance of the architecture, which helps slightly to soften this effect.



Figure 48 72 Liverpool Road

6.4 STREETScape FEATURES

6.4.1 Surfaces

The streetscape has a patchwork appearance owing to successive repairs and the use of different materials over time.

The majority of surfaces are concrete flags, mostly in grey but some are pink. There are sections remaining of older surface treatments such as stone kerbs, cobbles and pavements and some gutters retain cobbles, such as in Weld Road. Historic inspection covers with “B.D.C” or “B.L.B” inscribed are also of historic value.

The pavements are a much loved local historic feature in the Southport area but are increasingly rare owing to the fact that they are no longer manufactured.

6.4.2 Street name signage

A cast iron street name sign remains, mounted on the wall at Weld Road, see Fig 49. The enamel sign for Abbey Gardens is also of interest.

These road name signs are attractive historic features of the area and their positioning on walls is a tidy simple solution, minimising street clutter more than modern freestanding road name signs.



Figure 49

6.4.3 Street Furniture

A variety of street furniture in the area has developed over time and there is consequently little continuity of design. Varying designs and materials are used for lampposts, bollards, bins, planters & benches. Historic surviving features are important to the character of the area.

Lampposts

Abbey Gardens has retained two of its original lamp columns; however the lanterns are modern swan-necked replacements and do not aesthetically suit the columns. The design of the columns is different to other surviving historic columns in the area, probably owing to their slightly later date.

The other surviving historic columns in the conservation area are variously in need of maintenance work. There are also a number of modern columns which are tall and variously designed, the disparity in design and materials detracts from the streetscene.



Figure 50 Historic columns in need of maintenance



Figure 51 mismatching modern columns

Planters

Several planters have been established in Liverpool Road, these bring colour to the street scene and illustrate a sense of local pride. Different designs of planters are evident.

Post Box

A traditional royal mail red post box located outside the Post office on Liverpool Road enhances the appearance of the conservation area.

7 NEGATIVE FACTORS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCEMENT

Birkdale Village has lost some very significant buildings from its streetscape, particularly its civic buildings. However its character as a turn of the century commercial centre remains intact. The area is very fortunate to retain a significant number of historic buildings and historic shopfronts and verandahs, though there are evident problems developing as a result of a long term lack of maintenance and repair. Losses are slowly but progressively occurring to architectural details of properties and their green settings.

7.1 NEGATIVE FACTORS

7.1.1 Losses from the townscape

Birkdale Town Hall/Carnegie Library/Police station & courts

The buildings were of a grand scale and were originally the focus of the area as an independent town. The loss of these civic buildings reduces the perception of the central status of this area, and diminishes understanding of its origins.

23 Liverpool Road & 73-73 Alma Road

A pair of properties stood prominently at the end point of views from both the railway station and looking north along Liverpool Road. The shops had a cast iron canopy and elaborate roofline. They were architecturally in keeping with the Victorian/Edwardian character of the area and their demolition in the 1960s was a great loss to the character of the area. The replacement building is of poor appearance and is a negative feature of the area.

Suitable redevelopment of these sites would present the opportunity to enhance the appearance of the area.

7.1.2 Poor quality / ill-considered later 20th C alterations to buildings

Joinery details

Although a number of houses and shops retain their original joinery details, many shopfronts, windows, doors and vergeboards have been lost to a variety of timber or upvc replacements. These losses are detrimental to the area's character.

Originally there would have been greater similarity between windows and this would have provided greater consistency to the appearance of the streetscene. Many of the alterations that have taken place to fenestration have been harmful to the appearance of the conservation area.

The loss of sash windows for modern top hung casements and more recently pvc windows with varying opening details has been detrimental to the area's character.



Figure 52 Comparative photographs showing differences between traditional timber sashes and casement PVC replacements

PVC windows usually demonstrate thicker sectional details, unequal sized panes, a different method of opening, a slick finish, differing joint details and crudely detailed arches. These differences mark them out as incongruous elements which look alien in the conservation area.”

Walls

The application of any kind of cladding to brick is always a negative factor. This is particularly so when cladding is applied to one half of a semi-detached pair of houses as it is immediately apparent that it is a later addition and the symmetry of design is lost. Birkdale village includes properties which are designed to look symmetrical, but where one property is actually larger than the other. When one of these is rendered or altered the illusion of symmetry is lost.

Where render has been applied, this has variously affected the architectural detail. In some instances it has all but obliterated features, and in other instances the render has not been applied to the details, but they have been painted in a matching colour. Both these approaches harm the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Roofs

Alterations have taken place to the roovescape. Reductions to the heights of chimneys are a particular problem as this reduces the variety in the skyline.

The labour club building originally had a much more elaborate roof with a cupola and the building at 43-49 Liverpool Road was much more regular in its design, also having a more elaborate roovescape (see pictures below). It would be beneficial for these features to be reinstated.



Figure 53 Historic photograph of 43-49 Liverpool Road and Labour club c1910



Figure 54 43-49 and the Labour club as they look now

Alterations to the roofing materials are also a negative factor in the area but this is fortunately not a common occurrence.

7.1.3 Shopfronts

Several shopfronts are poorly formed with design flaws such as overlarge fascias, uncharacteristic materials or poor quality signage which has not been sympathetically designed or located.

Access ramps on the pavement are poorly designed and intrude on the public realm.

7.1.4 Verandahs

The deteriorating condition of the verandahs is a particular concern especially given their historic importance and architectural distinctiveness. Their run-down appearance affects the perception of attractiveness of the area, this is particularly so as they are such prominent and central features of the Conservation Area.

7.1.5 Green spaces and planting

The loss of planted gardens to the front of dwellings, reduces the sense of exclusivity and residential privacy; greenery is now wholly lacking in some cases. The creation of hardstandings within front gardens and loss of large shrubs and trees reduces the sense of grandeur and sumptuousness that would have originally been. This has been detrimental to the character of the area.

7.1.6 Unsympathetic new-build and extensions

There are some instances of new build properties in the conservation area. These have not generally respected the grain and density of the area nor used locally distinctive materials and for these reasons stand out as uncharacteristic.

Examples:

Flats at 72 Liverpool Road are very plainly detailed. They are three storeys high, rather than the locally typical two. The building is not higher than its neighbours because the storey heights are much shallower which gives the building a denser appearance and does not reflect the grandness of the buildings that surround it. The landscaping, particularly to the frontage along Crosby Road is very hard landscaped with parking spaces. This also adds to the perception of increased density and loss of spaciousness.

The house at 2a Welbeck Road is much smaller than its neighbours within a smaller plot. Its materials and details do not match any other property.

21 Liverpool Road is built of a yellow brick and has a flat roof. Its appearance is unsympathetic to the character of the area and its prominent position within the streetscene at the termination of several views amplifies the effect.

7.1.7 Streetscape

Bus shelters are modern in design and most in the conservation area have recently been renewed. They are of a fairly chunky modern design but are black with a large advert. One of the shelters in the conservation area on Weld Road is black with yellow trim, this is less sympathetic to the historic qualities of the area.

A number of bollards have been installed within the streetscape, particularly around the area outside Spar supermarket, 21-23 Liverpool Road. These clutter the appearance of the pavement.

Another problem affecting the streetscape is the on-pavement parking outside 31-37 Liverpool Road. The markings on the pavements and the parked cars which obstruct the flow of pedestrians negatively affect the character of the area.

The tree pits to the more mature trees have recently been renewed, which has introduced more continuity of design. Some of the tree pits remain quite small and in others trees are off-centre. Additional improvement works may need to be planned for in the future.



Figure 55

7.2 OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCEMENT

7.2.1 Alterations to residential properties

Guidance Leaflet

The changes that many householders make to their properties have collectively harmed the character of the area. It is likely that many of these alterations are made due to a lack of awareness and appreciation of the value of the area and of those elements which contribute to its character.

The existing leaflet needs updating. Regular distribution would raise awareness of the conservation area and provide guidance for residents and developers

Article 4

The cumulative effect of minor changes not currently requiring planning permission is clearly evident in this conservation area. Replacement windows, doors and eaves details, the reduction of chimneys and the alteration of front boundary walls have clearly had a detrimental impact in the character and appearance of the area.

An Article 4 Direction would help to prevent further detrimental changes taking place.

7.2.2 Shopfronts & Signage

The historic shopfronts are exceptionally important to the character of the area, and the trend which has developed for black and white signage should be encouraged as this engenders a sense of place.

Traditional signwritten advertisements marry well with the original shopfronts as this is the type of signage that they were designed for. Signage which is prefabricated, or more particularly internally illuminated, will always appear 'stuck on' as the depth of the units will stand proud of fascias.

Some of the shops have large ramps, in various designs located outside of them, these are unsightly and affect pedestrian movement. Smaller ramps can present a potential trip hazard. When the opportunity arises, the design and positioning of accessibility measures should be reconsidered and improvements made.

Verandahs

The verandahs are a key part of the area's character and their character is compromised by a combination of inappropriate signage and poor state of repair. The perceptions of the area would improve if these could be upgraded.

7.2.3 Restoration of architectural features

Several properties have lost architectural features, notably roof level details, windows and doors. Reinstatement of original details would strengthen the historic character of the area and reinforce local distinctiveness.

7.2.4 Trees

The street trees would benefit from a detailed evaluation. The trees themselves are an important part of the streetscene and provide a very pleasant setting for the shops. Trees should be assessed in terms of their condition and succession planting considered and planned for in order to maintain the mature tree lined setting of the village. Tree pits may also need to be redesigned in the future to allow for growth of the younger trees etc.

7.2.5 Street works

Considerable improvements could be made to the appearance of the area by reducing unnecessary street clutter, improving the appearance and positioning of street furniture and traffic management measures.

Examples where improvements could be made are;

- Refurbishments and repairs to historic cast iron lamp columns.
- Removal of mis-matching columns along Liverpool Road and installation of a consistent and well designed streetlighting scheme.
- Removal of any unnecessary advisory signs from the highway
- Removal of parking on pavements
- Use of lining appropriate to sensitive areas (primrose yellow or cream & 50mm)
- Re-designing of cycle stands
- Improving the size of the tree pits
- Reinstatement of Southport pavements to streetscape
- Improvements to design of bus stops.
- Introducing a consistent design theme within street furniture

7.3 CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARIES

7.3.1 Designated Boundaries

The current boundaries have been tightly drawn, focusing on the commercial area of Birkdale Village and its residential setting.

The commercial area of Birkdale village is all included within the boundaries of the conservation area. The area also encompasses a number of residential properties along the length of Liverpool Road running south and running east-

west along Welbeck Road. There are a number of similar residential properties on the side streets which are not included within the conservation area.

The Park Hotel is an important part of the area's history, being the location where early governance took place. The trees and open space behind the Park Hotel form an important backdrop to it as viewed from Weld Road, giving a sense of spaciousness and status to the Hotel. The land opposite, though redeveloped, is the site of Birkdale's civic buildings. The area is now a parade of shops and block of flats, the area forms an important gateway into and out of the village when travelling along Weld Road.

The station and former railway land in northern and southern directions are important to views from the railway crossing and the footpaths running alongside the railway.

Properties on Liverpool Road provide an understanding of what the area was prior to the commercial area developing. The gradual changes in the properties travelling south to north, from residential to converted residential to purpose built shops, gives a flavour of the developmental history of the centre. The residential properties also bear the evidence of the changes in the status of the road following the emergence of the commercial area, reflected in the format of the gardens.

Abbey Gardens is unusual in that it is a residential development that post-dates the arrival of the shops. It embraces the architectural ethos of the times and complements the architecture of the commercial properties. The boundaries encompass the entryway running north, which pre-dates this area of residential development.

The other residential streets such as Alma Road and Welbeck Road are important for their contribution to the residential setting of the commercial area. Alma Road contains a variety of styles and ages of buildings consistent with the main styles and periods of development of the area, Welbeck Road contains slightly lower status housing, more densely developed than that on Liverpool Road, which demonstrates the hierarchical structure of the development that took place.

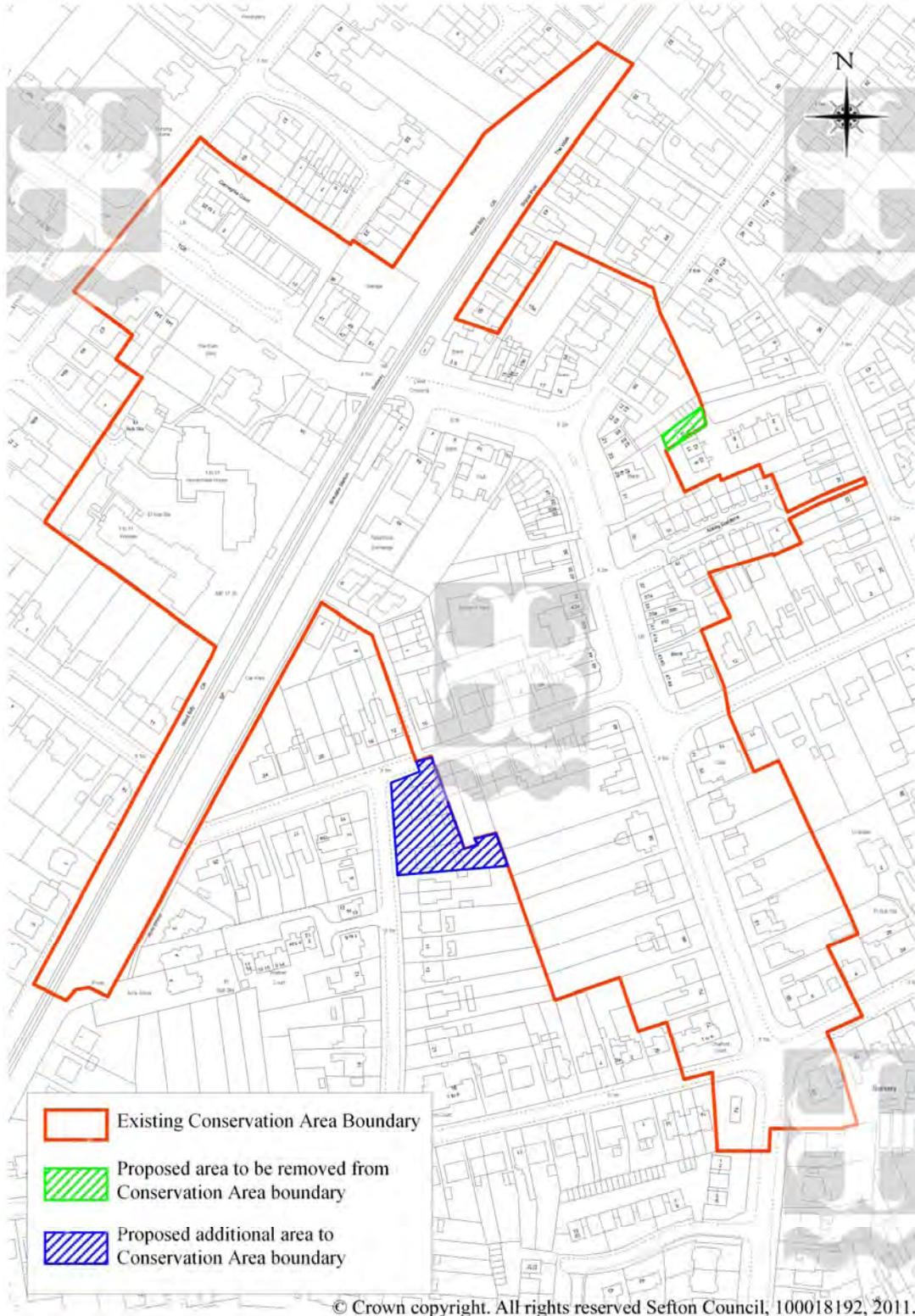
7.3.2 Suggested boundary amendments

- It would be helpful to include no. 13 Welbeck Road and nos. 1 & 3 Walmer Road within the conservation area as they belong to a group of buildings of consistent design detailing and most likely constructed by the same builder

The design of the semi-detached pair turns the corner between Welbeck and Walmer and its front facing gable dormer raises it above the level of the others creating a discernable 'end' to Walmer and Welbeck roads.

- The boundary of the conservation area with Claremont Gardens is confusing, and does not relate to existing features. This has arisen as a result of Claremont Gardens being developed after the conservation areas boundaries were originally set.

The proposed alteration sees a small reduction in the conservation area, to omit 14 & 15 Claremont Gardens.



Plan 15 Proposed Alterations to Existing Conservation Area Boundary

References

Birkdale Council Minutes

Barnes, H. G. (1987) Birkdale Historic Trail

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'Townships: Birkdale', A History of the County of Lancaster: Volume 3 (1907), pp. 236-238. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=41327>
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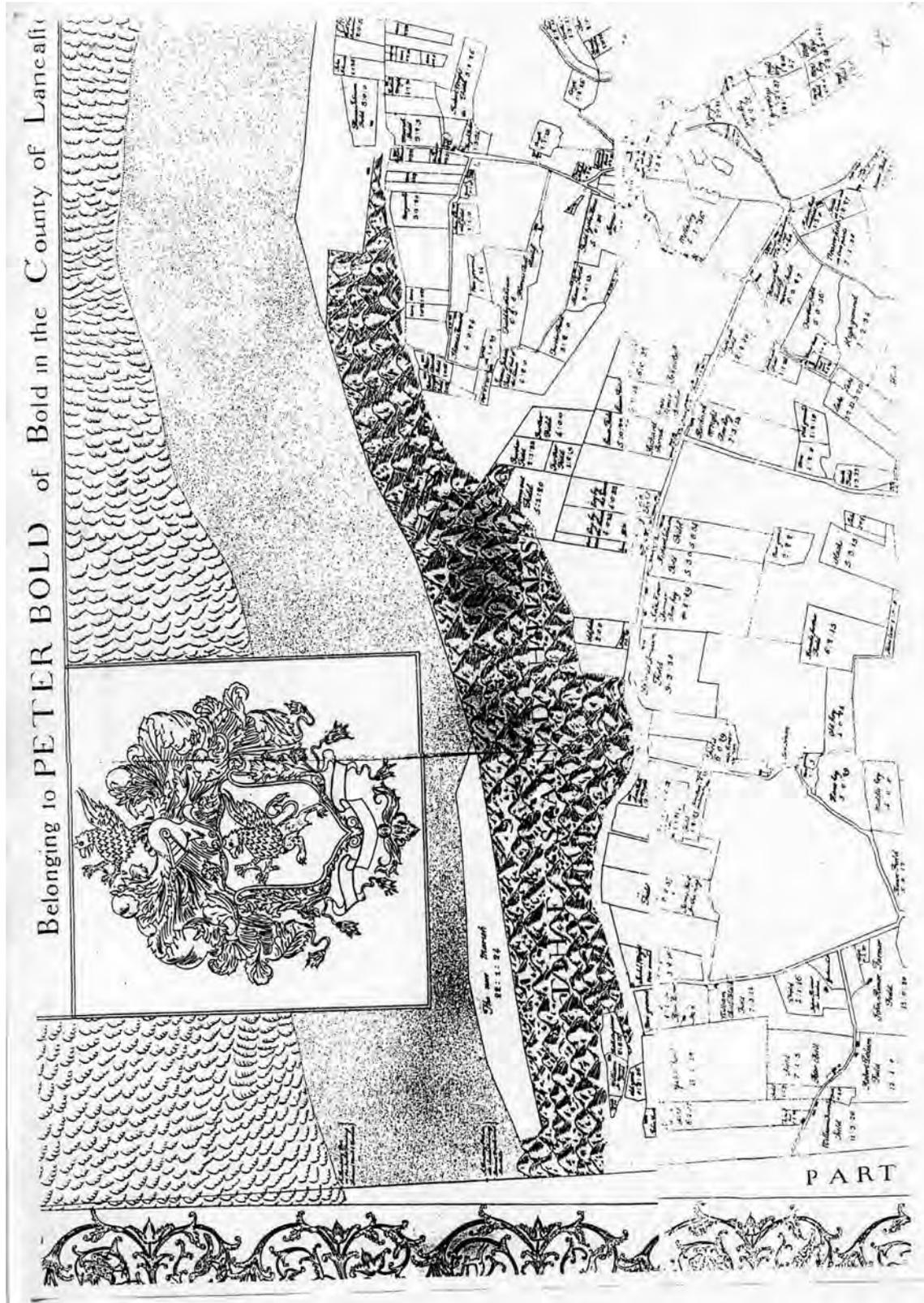
APPENDICES AND SCHEDULE OF AMENDMENTS

APPENDICES

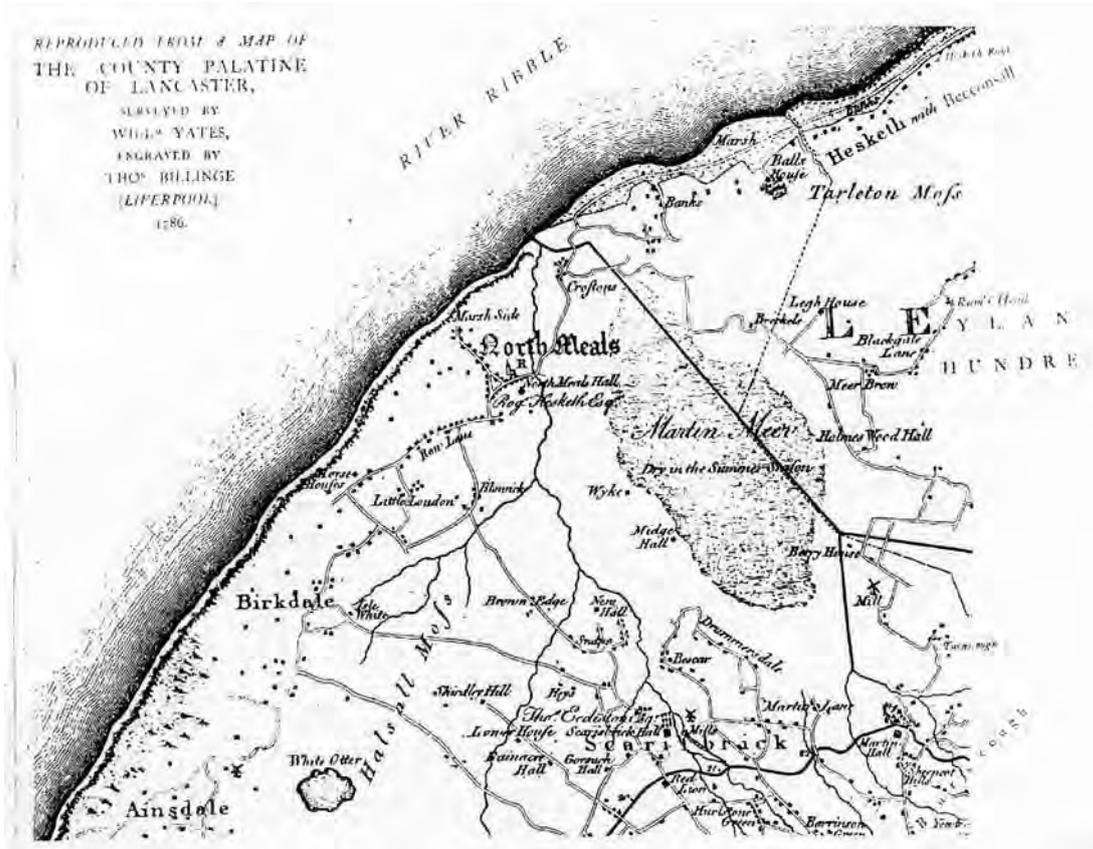
- A. HENRY BANKES MAP 1736
- B. YATES MAP 1786
- C. 1845 OS
- D. 1868 JOHNSON AND GREEN PLAN (FOSTER)
- E. 1893 OS
- F. 1911 OS
- G. 1927 OS
- H. SCHEDULE OF AMENDMENTS

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APPENDIX A HENRY BANKES MAP 1736



APPENDIX B YATES MAP 1786

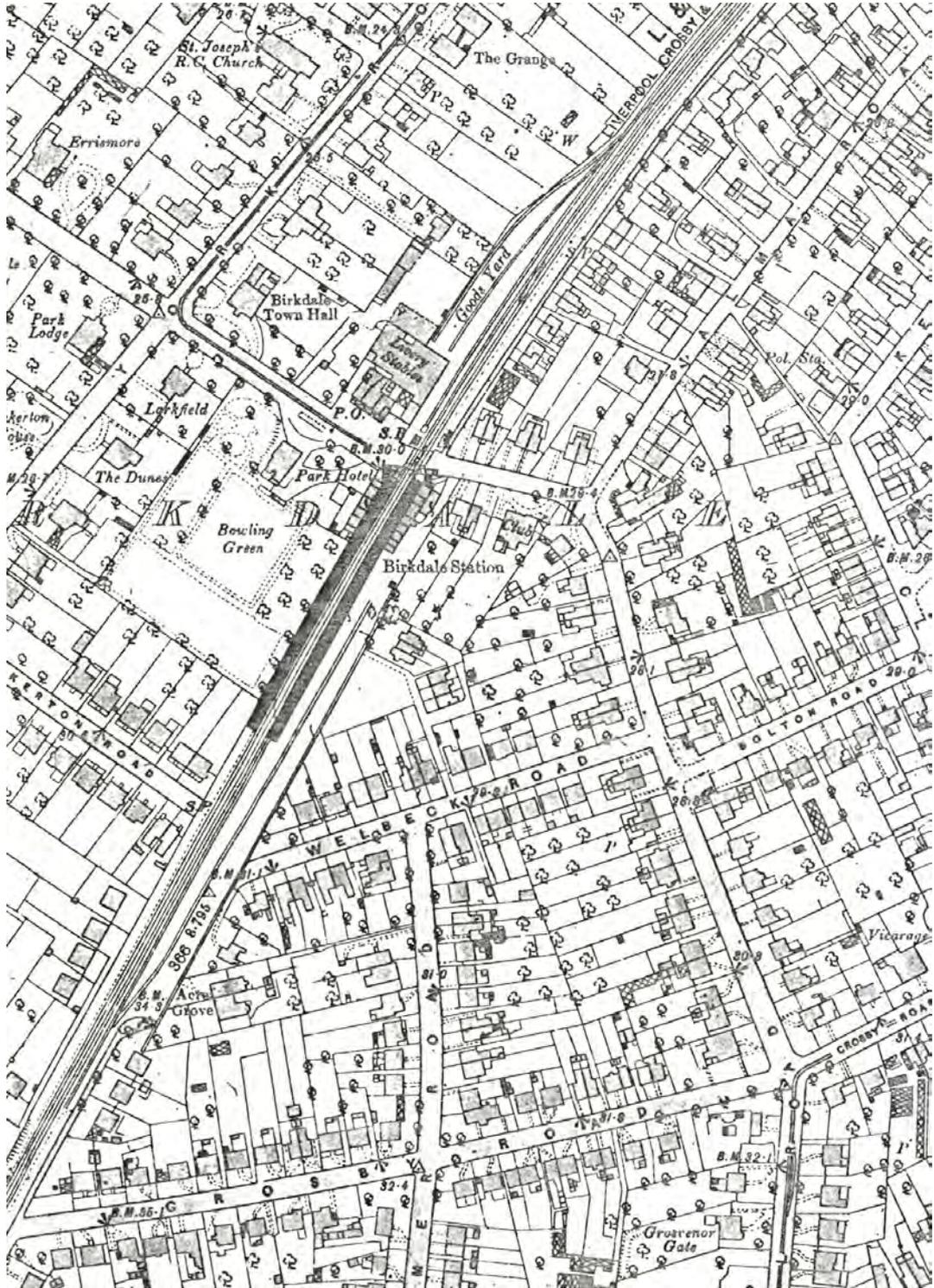


APPENDIX C 1845 OS



1845 Ordnance Survey mapping reproduced from Sefton Council's archives

APPENDIX E 1893 OS



1893 Ordnance Survey mapping reproduced from Sefton Council's archives

APPENDIX G 1927 OS



1927 Ordnance Survey mapping reproduced from Sefton Council's Archives

APPENDIX H SCHEDULE OF AMENDMENTS

Schedule of amendments

Plan 2, p9	red dot made smaller to make location information more precise.
Plan 3, p11	Names of conservation areas added to plan
5.2 Add sentence to end of 2 nd paragraph, p33	“Some buildings share closer connections with repeated forms suggesting that they were built at the same time by the same individual, see Plan 12, p38 for locations.”
6.2.7, p56	Re-word last sentence, 2 nd paragraph to read “Fortunately the pavements are quite wide, but nonetheless they do detract both physically and visually from the public realm”
7.1.1 Add new paragraph at end of section, p63	‘Suitable redevelopment of these sites would present the opportunity to enhance the appearance of the area.’
Add new paragraph at 7.2.3 & re-numbering following paragraphs as needed, p68	“7.2.3 Restoration of architectural features Several properties have lost architectural features, notably roof level details, windows and doors. Reinstatement of original details would strengthen the historic character of the area and reinforce local distinctiveness.”
7.3.1 Add sentence to third paragraph, p69-70	The Park Hotel is an important part of the area’s history, being the location where early governance took place. <u>The trees and open space behind the Park Hotel form an important backdrop to it as viewed from Weld Road, giving a sense of spaciousness and status to the Hotel.</u> The land opposite, though redeveloped, is the site of Birkdale’s civic buildings. The area is now a parade of shops and block of flats, the area forms an important gateway into <u>and out of</u> the village when travelling along Weld Road.
7.3.1 Add new fourth paragraph, p70	‘The station and former railway land in northern and southern directions are important to views from the railway crossing and the footpaths running alongside the railway’

Public Consultation results.

7 people attended the public consultation event, of these 4 filled in our evaluation form. All those who responded were in the 50 or over age group. 75% lived in the Conservation area, 50% shopped there and 25% visited friends.

100% were happy with the chosen venue at Southport & Birkdale Sports Club.

75% felt the information provided was very useful with 25% feeling most information had already been provided in the letter to residents.

100% of respondents were able to speak to a Conservation Officer and they all felt they had their questions answered.

Comments were received about the Appraisal document are from Birkdale Civic Society and have been duly noted.

An additional consultee made comments via email about the area's boundaries, these views have been taken into account.