

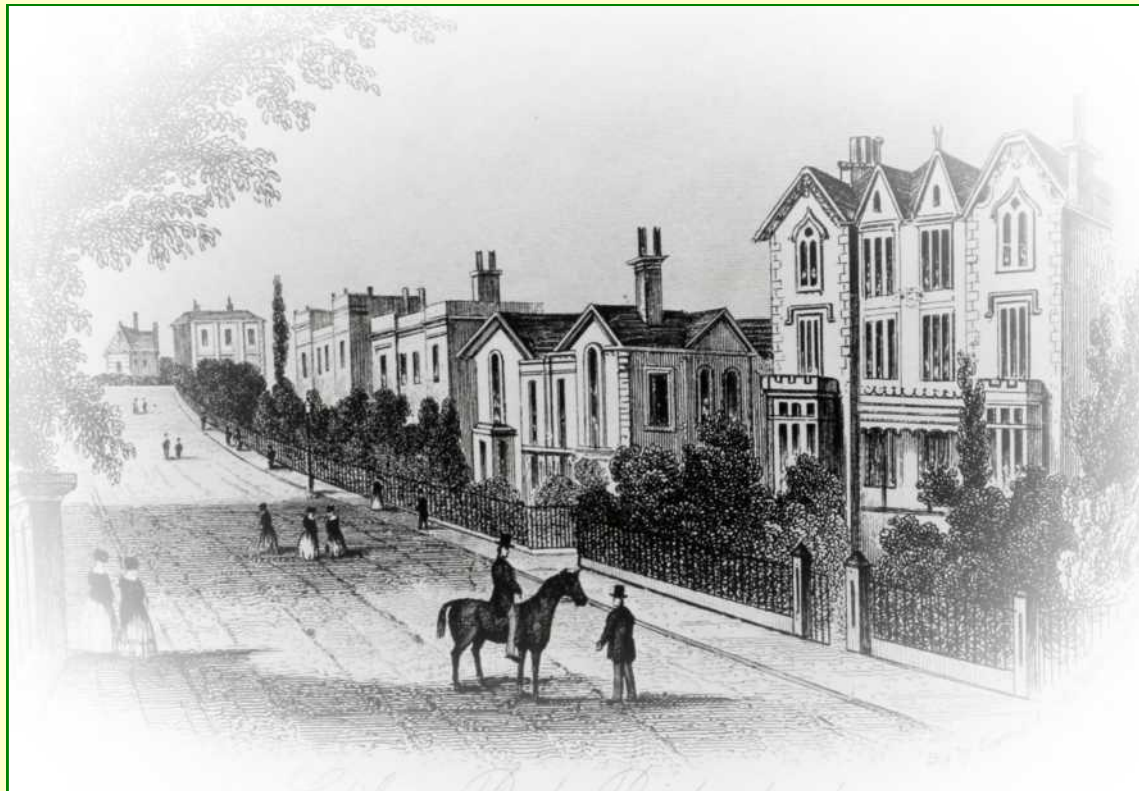


CONSERVATION
AREAS WIRRAL

Promoting & Protecting in Partnership

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ANNUAL REPORT



2021 / 2022



CONTENTS

Introduction	Page 3
Birkenhead Park World Heritage Bid	5
Solar Panels discussion	6
Birkenhead Waterfront Plans	7
A Design Dilemma	8
New Design Codes & a concept of Beauty	9
Meols Drive & Kings Gap Appeal	10
Conservation Area & Heritage Trail	11
Blue Plaque update	12
Wellington Road CA — A closer look	13/14
Conservation Area Reports	15 — 22
The latest from Wirral Green Space Alliance	23
CAW Annual Accounts	24

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Introduction

The COVID pandemic has resulted in difficult challenges to Conservation Areas Wirral (CAW). Like many other voluntary organisations we have had to learn new skills to function as normally as possible. Notably this has involved using digital programmes such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams. For around two years this has been the main mode of communication in terms of committee meetings and other less formal interactions.

This has been challenging and was particularly evident in our communication with Wirral Council on the now submitted draft Local Plan.

THE DRAFT LOCAL PLAN

Extensive discussions took place with Council officers on the content of the plan in relation to Wirral's 26 Conservation Areas. Our final comments are attached as Appendix 1. They illustrate our view on what should be the policy framework for each Conservation Area. We were very pleased when this framework was largely adopted by the Council officers which is reflected by what is now included on the face of the draft local plan.

Our major concerns were highlighted as:

- 1 The limited Council resources** available to protect the character of the 26 Conservation Areas
- 2 The consequential impact on the ability of the Council** to monitor and enforce the imposition of action to deal with breaches of planning controls.
- 3 The very large numbers of properties across the 26 areas** that are defined as making a "positive contribution to the character of the area" but have limited protection under the current planning regulations.

The Council are not in a position to make Article 4 Directions which would reduce the types of development that is deemed to be permitted including, for example, doors, windows, and roofs. The one area in the Wirral that has an Article 4 Direction is Bromborough Pool CA. Unfortunately this Conservation Area is partly characterised by its breaches rather than its conformity. This is visually evident in the cascade of TV satellite dishes.

The latter have also become visually evident in one of Wirral's "crown jewel" Conservation Areas - namely Hamilton Square!

- 4 Unfortunately Wirral Council** has not been able to maintain the momentum generated in the post 2000-2010 period when a significant number of Character Appraisals and Management Plans for many of the areas were completed and approved. Many of these are still relevant as guides to planning decisions but a significant number of areas do not have this protection. Conversely a number of other areas while having this protection are now finding that it is outdated and ineffective.

The Conservation Areas in Hoylake, namely Meols Drive and Kings Gap, which lack any Management Plans which is particularly challenging as developers submit applications to change the use/demolish the substantial properties of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

BIRKENHEAD PARK - WORLD HERITAGE SITE BID

BREAKING NEWS

Wirral Council, with assistance from the Friends of Birkenhead Park, submitted a successful application to be included on the UK's Tentative List for World Heritage Site Inscription in July 2022. An announcement was made over the Easter Weekend and media interviews were carried out by the Chair and Administrator of the Friends of Birkenhead Park and the former World Heritage Site Project Manager for Wirral Council.

DDCMS has provisionally accepted the argument that the Park is the world's first municipally funded public park and a pioneer for public parks across the world. The application met three criteria for inscription: -

- 1 *to represent a masterpiece of human creative genius.*
- 2 *to exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design.*
- 3 *to be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates a significant stage in human history.*

The Park was designed by Sir Joseph Paxton in the traditions of the English Landscape School. The Lakes with promontories and bays encircled by sinuous paths, the Grand Entrance, Roman Boathouse, Swiss Bridge and the Rockfall gave expression to a quality of design previously only seen in prestigious private parks.

It was the first public park, locally financed through the Improvement Commissioners by the sale of surrounding land for the building of villas. This set a design and financing model for similar public park developments in towns across Britain, Europe, the Empire and North America.

As Britain was the foremost country in the Industrial Revolution and at the vanguard of urbanisation, the need for public 'lungs' in the burgeoning towns with their polluting coal fires and dense terraces was presaged by the new town of Birkenhead. The free-flowing design and greenery of the park provided sharp contrast and relief to the grid iron of streets. The lodges were a pattern book of the development of English domestic architecture, whilst the structures within the Park were an expression of the architectural delights to be found on the continent. It was truly international in scope and a basis for the Outstanding Universal Value for Inscription as a World Heritage Site.

Wirral Council, with the involvement of stakeholders, must now convince the UK government to choose and put forward the Park for inscription as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. In doing so, it needs to demonstrate that the authenticity and integrity of the Park has been retained and that management processes will maintain them into the future.



SOLAR PANELS IN CONSERVATION AREAS - THE DO'S AND DON'TS

The installation of solar panels in conservation areas has emerged as a challenging policy issue this year. This reflects the move towards addressing issues of clean energy and the government's net zero targets.

In summary - Planning permission is required for solar panels on a wall facing the road or on a listed building.

Placing solar panels on the roof of your house or flat, or a building within the grounds of your house or flat is usually 'Permitted Development' and does not require planning permission.

Planning permission is usually **not required for**

- i) Stand-alone solar panels (except for listed buildings)
- ii) heat pumps
- iii) a flue, forming part of a microgeneration biomass heating system,
- iv) flue, forming part of a microgeneration combined heat and power
- v) microgeneration wind turbine

Want to know more?

Placing solar panels on the roof of your house or flat, or a building within the grounds of your house or flat, is considered in most cases 'Permitted Development', whether this is in a conservation area or otherwise. This means that in general there is no need to seek planning permission from your Local Planning Authority (LPA) to proceed, **subject to certain conditions**. Namely the solar panels:

- 1 Will not stick out in front of the building, when measured horizontally from the wall or roof slope, by more than 20cm.
- 2 Will not be positioned so that they are higher than the main ridge line of the roof, or higher than the highest flat roof where roofs on the building are flat. NB Chimneys, firewalls, parapet walls and other protrusions above the main roof ridge line or flat roof cannot be counted when considering the height of the highest part of the roof of the existing house or flat.
- 3 Will so far as practicable, be sited to minimise their effect on the external appearance of the building.
- 4 Will so far as practicable, be sited to minimise their effect on the amenity (attractiveness) of the area.
- 5 Are removed as soon as reasonably practicable when they are no longer needed.

In addition, solar panels **cannot** be installed:

- 6 on a wall which faces the road.
- 7 on a listed building (including any building within the listed building's grounds).

What about Stand-alone Solar Panels?

The installation, alteration or replacement of stand-alone solar for microgeneration within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse or a block of flats does not usually require planning permission, subject to certain conditions eg

- Within the curtilage of a listed building
- Maximum of 4 m high
- Not within 5 m of curtilage
- Maximum area of 9 sqm

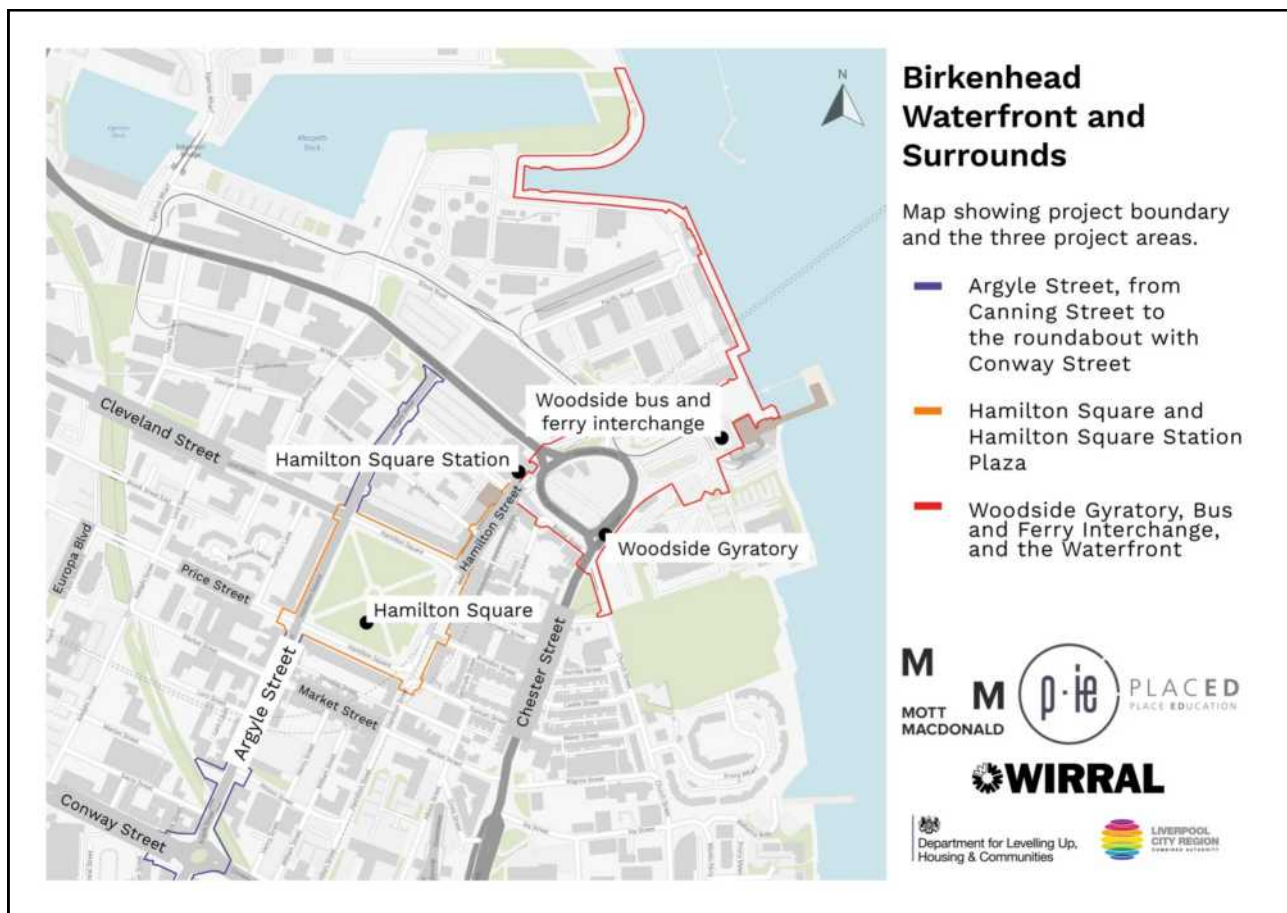
Further details

Most micro-generation systems do not usually require planning permission within a Conservation Area. However, there are rules which impose some detailed restrictions on the design of these systems. These can be viewed using this link <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2015/596/schedule/2/part/14/made>.

Are Birkenhead's waterfront assets about to get a makeover?

Wirral Council has commissioned a design team to deliver highway and public realm improvements to Wirral waterfront and its surrounding areas, covering the area from and including the Argyle Street/ Conway Street roundabout to Woodside Ferry Terminal.

This project is called '**Wirral Waterfront and Surrounds**' and can be split into three parts – Argyle Street, Hamilton Square and Station, and Woodside and the Waterfront. The design team, which includes **Mott Macdonald**, **Planit-IE** and **Placed**, are looking at how these areas could be redesigned to be more attractive with improved landscaping, more accessible walking and cycling spaces and better connection between the Central Birkenhead retail area with the Waterfront.



This project is funded by various funding pots including the Towns Fund and Levelling Up Fund from the UK Government and Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.

Wirral Council's bid to the Government included the idea that investment should focus on the **Conservation Area** around Hamilton Square and the strategic transport locations of Hamilton Square Station and Woodside Ferry Terminal. The council's bid focused on these areas because they function as a key corridor between the waterfront and the town centre. This project is also part of the wider programme of regeneration activities in Birkenhead as part of the 2040 Framework.

PLACED are running a series of public and community engagement activities as part of this consultation process to hear and gather locals thoughts on the redesigning of Wirral Waterfront and its surrounding areas. **PLACED** are a Liverpool-based social enterprise who engage communities in the design, planning and development of the urban built environment. Let's hope they are able to "pull it off".

ASHTON HOUSE - A DESIGN DILEMMA FOR THE COUNCIL?

Largest new site in Oxton Conservation Area subject of delay due to **lack of design quality** of the proposed new housing.

By far the largest potential development scheme in Oxton is the proposed redevelopment of the NHS Ashton House site in Village Rd. The main part of the site has now been released for development and an application has been submitted by a developer. The approach by the Council planners to the development of the site is of general interest, especially with regard to the design quality of the new housing.

In anticipation of this significant application, the OXTON Society drew up a list of criteria in advance which we



used to evaluate it. We judged that the application met most of our criteria. We supported the approach adopted in terms of site layout, landscaping and access and welcomed the retention of the Victorian Ashton House, most of the mature trees and the boundary wall. We were disappointed that the proposals were not designed to be carbon neutral at hand-over, or optimised the use of passive energy by design.

The application would see the conversion of Ashton House itself into 11 apartments, the demolition of two other NHS buildings and the building of 5 new dwellings.

However, progress in deciding on the application has been delayed. The Society has been

told that the Council are concerned about the design of the five new houses, which they don't consider

to be of sufficient quality to make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area.

Consequently the architects have been asked to produce an improved design.

In the words of the Council's Conservation and Urban Design consultant

“ the new houses are considered to be ‘pastiche’ (i.e. standard developer spec housing with a rather clunky nod to the conservation area bolted on) and we should be expecting higher standards of design and architectural detailing, whether this is contemporary or traditional in appearance.”

This represents a distinct change in emphasis re the importance of design in influencing the quality and character of the development. We hope that this approach is being applied across all 26 Conservation Areas in the Wirral.

The Council planners are still working to resolve these issues and once they have designs that, in principle they may be able to support, they will publish them and seek further public comment on the revisions.

Watch this space.

NEW DESIGN CODES AND THE CONCEPT OF BEAUTY?

In all the hurly burly of recent months the Government have now published a new Planning Bill. This includes a requirement on all local authorities to publish Council wide design codes. Should they fail to respond, the Bill gives powers for the Secretary of State to intervene.

The code will set the design requirements that developments must follow. They also state that the code will be part of the authority's local plan or have the status of one of the new "supplementary plans" proposed in the Bill. This will give the code's design requirements the weight of the development plan when making planning decisions.

Extract from Government Design Guide:

Ten characteristics of well designed places

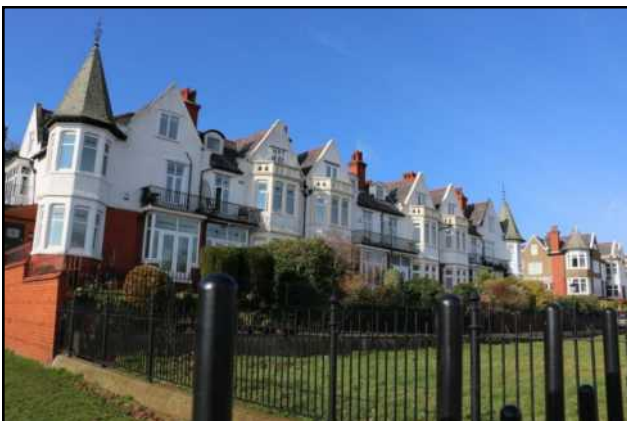
■ **Context** – enhances the surroundings. ■ **Identity** – attractive and distinctive. ■ **Built form** – a coherent pattern of development. ■ **Movement** – accessible and easy to move around. ■ **Nature** – enhanced and optimised. ■ **Public spaces** – safe, social and inclusive. ■ **Uses** – mixed and integrated. ■ **Homes and buildings** – functional, healthy and sustainable. ■ **Resources** – efficient and resilient. ■ **Lifespan** –made to last

This means the code will have to be subject to at least one round of consultation and an independent examination. Commentators have noted that the move to enshrine the codes in legislation transforms them from a "policy requirement" into a "legal" one.

Drawing up a Wirral wide design code will be particularly challenging. The Council has limited access to urban design advice and concern has been expressed about the ultimate quality of the codes. They are unlikely to provide an automatic panacea in terms of design quality. Inevitably the Council will have to commission external consultants to undertake this work. CAW will be monitoring this process closely.

CAW has expressed concern since we were established in 2014 about the design quality of many new developments proposed in the Area's 26 Conservation Areas. Interestingly, there have been more recent signs that the Council recognises the crucial importance of design quality in and outside Conservation Areas. This is reflected in the decision to reject the design of the new houses in the Ashton House development in Oxton (see example in this report). In addition the development of the old Stirrup pub site on Arrowe Park Road has been refused permission on design grounds.

The concept of 'Beauty'



The Magazines seafront—an example of 'beauty' ?

The National Policy Planning Framework now includes the phrase "**achieving well designed and beautiful places**". There is a general feeling that "beauty" is an amorphous concept which is hard to achieve through a set of planning policies. So this will be challenging for the Council and have to be carefully defined in any process of commissioning work by external consultants. Conversely, in tandem with design codes, this could provide the basis for achieving the well-designed places we all strive for. In effect "**beauty**" may emerge from good design but it may be difficult to turn down an application on the grounds that a scheme is not beautiful!!!

PROTECTING THE PAST BUT ALSO ENHANCING THE FUTURE

Hoylake Conservation Areas Association have launched an appeal for funding to support their two Conservation Areas of Meols Drive and Kings Gap.



Since being designated in 2004 and 2000, both areas have out of date Appraisals and no Management Plans to guide Planning decisions. As a result the fine buildings and historic landscapes are under threat, particularly where family homes are being demolished to be replaced by blocks of flats. Up to date documents will help to assess planning applications and assist in proper decision making by Council Planners.

Wirral Council has agreed to allocate £10,000 towards the cost of employing the approved consultants but this only represents half the expected bill as the company would update the CA Appraisal documents as well as producing Management Plans for both.

Without these plans, the CA's are vulnerable to “speculative development proposals”.

In addition, the new Local Plan is about to be examined by independent Inspectors and the work will provide evidence to support the Council's planning policies. The Plans could also feed into a review of the Hoylake Neighbourhood Development Plan as well as the Design Guide and Codes to ensure future development is in keeping with the existing properties.

The Association is asking for financial support and donations can be made to the Hoylake Conservation Areas Association bank account with the reference “Appraisals”, Account No 30622982, Sort Code: 20 50 36.

For further information contact Chris Moore, Chair of the Hoylake CA Association on kit.moore@gmail.com

CONSERVATION AREA & HERITAGE TRAIL

ENCOURAGING VISITORS TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT OUR CONSERVATION AREAS & HERITAGE ASSETS

Together with Robin Tutchins, the Council's Rights of Way Officer, CAW members worked to create a Heritage Trail around Wirral's 26 Conservation Areas which would highlight their value to Wirral's tourism as well as encouraging people to find out more about the Wirral generally. A link to the Trail, which was hosted on the Council's website, has been available from CAW's website but it was not a straightforward process. Then Covid arrived



Now discussions have commenced between Robin and CAW over how to improve the visibility and useability of the Trail. The latter is currently accessible by going onto the Wirral Council website link <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/built-conservation/wirral-conservation-area-and-heritage-trail>

CAW is particularly exploring with the Council how the trail can be made more interactive. One approach would be to develop an app for peoples' mobile phones.

Making the trail more visible would also be assisted by the production of hard copy leaflets, similar to the approach adopted for the coastal trail and cycle routes. In addition the text and images need updating to take account of physical changes in each of the areas. It is hoped that this project can move on at pace now that Covid restrictions have generally been lifted and face to face meetings, which feel more productive, can resume.



THE HISTORY & HERITAGE FAIR: 25 MARCH 2023

Held in Hulme Hall, Port Sunlight, the Fair was a huge success this year. With up to 100 stall holders, ranging from environmental, heritage, history projects, archaeology and militaria, there was truly something for everyone. The organisers were delighted to welcome over 1800 visitors through the doors too.

CAW had their stand there with information about living in Conservation Areas, some past newsletters giving visitors an idea of what we are about and our Blue Plaque leaflets which proved incredibly popular. In fact we ran out of them so Jane Morgan, Wirral Council, has said they will reprint an updated version for us so that is another project we are currently working on. The Mayor of Wirral kindly stopped for a chat with Committee member Kay Crook and Chairman, Alan Chape too.



BLUE PLAQUE UPDATE



For nearly a decade Peter Bolt served on the CAW committee. He led the committee on the installation of blue plaques and he also erected a large proportion of them bringing ideas and practical skills to the task. Over a period of five years, he organised approximately 16 blue plaques at various locations around the Wirral.

He was very committed to the cause but has now transferred that commitment to realising the vision of having a statue of Thomas Brassey outside Chester Railway Station in his role as Secretary of The Thomas Brassey Society. Good luck Peter. We miss you and will keep an eye on the Brassey appeal.

Thomas Brassey (7 November 1805 – 8 December 1870) was an English civil engineering contractor and manufacturer of building materials who was responsible for building much of the world's railways in the 19th century. By 1847, he had built about one-third of the railways in Britain, and by time of his death in 1870 he had built one in every twenty miles of railway in the world.

Thomas Brassey was the eldest son of John Brassey, a prosperous farmer, and his wife Elizabeth. The Brassey family had been living at Manor Farm in Buerton, a small settlement in the parish of Aldford, 6 miles (10 km) south of Chester, from at least 1663.

The Thomas Brassey Society is currently raising money for a statue of Thomas on the forecourt of Chester Station, one of many magnificent stations built by him during his career. To donate please go to:

<http://www.thomasbrasseysociety.org/donations.pdf>



Mark Blundell, The Lord Lieutenant of Merseyside and the Mayor of Wirral, Tony Smith, unveiling a blue plaque to Thomas Brassey outside the remains of his great Canada Works in Birkenhead in Beaufort Road.

AN IN-DEPTH LOOK AT THE WELLINGTON ROAD CONSERVATION AREA

On the approach to New Brighton, dominating Kings Parade, the New Brighton Dips and overlooking Liverpool Bay and the Irish Sea, stands an impressive row of listed buildings with distinctive architecture, iron work balconies, railings and weather boards.

Dating from 1835, these houses are the Wellington Road Villas; they provide the core of the Wellington Road Conservation Area. Together with their imposing red stone boundary walls, terraced gardens and set to the fore by the first of the New Brighton green dips at Pilots Way, these listed structures form the westerly gateway to New Brighton.

THE ARCHITECTURE

The design, embellishment, development, and extension of these properties, together with those of their seaward setting, evidence the evolution from the late Georgian era of William IV through to the Victorian and Edwardian periods into the 20th and 21st centuries.

The seafront row comprises 8 listed structures which, over the past two centuries, from 1835 onwards, have been split into multiple dwelling houses and apartments. Interestingly, the 3 westerly houses, 42, 44, and 46 Wellington Road, are cited as the first to be built under James Atherton's scheme for a "New Brighton" on Liverpool Bay overlooking the Irish Sea.

Between 1835 and 1900, the freeholders developed and extended their houses; ornate porticos, railings, friezes and railings were added to both the Wellington Road and seaward sides. Conservatories, and additional floors were added to some. So extensive were these developments that 44 Wellington Road (formerly "Stamford") through to what is now 38 Wellington Road, became a terrace. A similar process may have evolved further east at 28 and 30 Wellington Road (these properties again dating from 1835).

THE HOUSES

Facing South, and viewed west to east from Kings Parade, and referring to the properties by their Wellington Road numbers:

46 retains its original Georgian layout with the addition of an iron and stone balcony. The bottom part of scrubland, which was part of this property, has been developed with the construction of a modern bungalow. The property retains the original sandstone sea defence, together with its Victorian turreted folly.

44 has an extended iron balcony, additional floors have been built, and the property is capped with a decorative Edwardian red brick castellation.

42 ("Portland Villa"), has been extended significantly at some point between 1835 and 1870. This includes ornate chimney stacks, matching friezes, iron work and balcony.

40, 38 and 36 may all have been part of one building and are all covered by a single Grade 11 listing. These consist of one large building constructed in a more traditional Georgian style, flanked by two smaller houses. All 3 have signature iron balconies and the two flanking structures have ornate bargeboards.

34 ("Redcliffe") is a Tudor style red sandstone building. Constructed to a design by the architect Harvey Lonsdale Elmes (*of St George's Hall, Liverpool fame*), it is again an outstanding structure. "Redcliffe" is bounded on the Kings Parade/Pilots Way side by the original sea wall that is constructed from finely faced red sandstone blocks. That wall is simply the top of a massive structure that retains the magnificent, terraced garden above it.

30 and 28, referred to, because of their style, design and features, as the **Swiss Cottages**. They feature gabled roofs, ornate mouldings, bargeboards and iron work, and are set in fine terraced gardens. Once again, the original sandstone sea wall forms the properties' boundary with Pilots Way.

26 provides a change in style to a more distinctively late Georgian, early Victorian one. This building has not been extended. It provides the same signature design features as the other buildings along Wellington Road namely stucco render, elaborate ornate ironwork, friezes and cornices. From the Pilots Way side, around into Atherton Street, it retains the original high sandstone boundary walls.

24 is a further structure built to the design of Harvey Lonsdale Elmes. A large and extensive building in a Victorian style. Rectangular in construction, it is less elaborate than the other listed buildings along the front; that said, it is no less impressive. Indeed, the less ornate appearance of its main entrance together with its overall distinguished 'manorial' appearance complements and is complemented by the other listed buildings.

The Wellington Road Conservation Area was implemented in 1974 with the objective of preserving and conserving the architecture, design and setting of these properties together with their character and surrounds; to date, with some considerable success.



Portland Villa

SAUGHALL MASSIE

This Conservation Area, one of the four townships of the ancient parishes of Bidston, is currently surrounded by agricultural fields which is one of the main features highlighted in its Appraisal and why the village was designated a CA some years ago.

However, the agricultural nature is definitely ‘at risk’ as there are only two working farms left in the village and Diamond Farm has already had to be defended from a recent Planning Application to close the farm down and build houses on the site. The Conservation Area Society is actively monitoring the situation as one of the builders in the Lever Estates Consortium has also paid Vyner Estates a holding sum to build on the adjacent Green Belt fields if the land is de-designated and becomes available.



In the current Local Plan that has been submitted for examination, the land would be protected under its Green Belt status but the village is aware that that is likely to be challenged by the Consortium. If the fields are released for building, this would have a devastating impact upon the village atmosphere and must be resisted at all costs. The Saughall Pub recently also closed its doors but thankfully has now reopened with new tenants. The loss of the pub would undoubtedly result in its demolition or conversion into apartments which would be another nail in the CA’s coffin.

CLIFTON PARK

Clifton Park has been designated a “**Conservation Area At Risk**” by Historic England and is on their At Risk Register. Reports from the Conservation Committee tell us that the anti-social behaviour and vandalism is still a problem but that the Police are being very helpful and that has been reassuring. The change in policy by the YMCA, changing its function from an activity centre for young men to an addiction centre has not helped local residents.

No 42 Clifton Road, the historic Gothic property, has been purchased by a local family and is being restored to “health” which is one piece of good news.



From this



To this !

Over the period 2020-2022 two aspects of conservation area policy were highlighted which have implications for other conservation areas:

- Firstly — sandstone walls which form an important part of the character of the village and a number of other conservation areas e.g. Lower Heswall and
- Secondly, the design of houses to be located in the last large development site in the Oxton area

Sandstone walls

These provide a visual cohesion that makes Oxton feel like a special place even with the wide variety of buildings that are found behind them. Hence the importance of understanding what you can and cannot do, when deciding to make changes to walls.

A major change occurred in 2017 when the High Court decided what the Judge described as a small but important point regarding the proper approach to the demolition of walls in Conservation Areas.



It involved the distinction between **altering** and **demolishing** a wall. The alteration of a gate or wall in a Conservation Area is permitted development, but the **demolition of such structures is not permitted**. The judgement related to a case in the Bath Conservation Area where part of a wall had been removed. The local planning authority served an enforcement notice requiring the wall to be reinstated. The party concerned appealed but the inspector found that the works amounted to demolition, not alteration, and as such did not constitute permitted development.

The Oxton Management Plan, adopted by the Council in July 2012, recognised the importance of sandstone walls and gateposts and singled them out for special mention. It underlined that there should be a

“strong presumption in favour of resisting the loss of traditional boundary walls and vegetation in order to create accesses or forecourt parking.”

Therefore, walls in Oxton have extensive formal protection. The law says that you will need planning permission to: demolish a gate, fence, wall or railing over 1 metre high next to a highway (including a public footpath or bridleway) or public open space; or over 2 metres high elsewhere. The definition of demolition includes even the partial demolition of a wall. In some cases, Planning Permission is needed before you can erect or alter a gate, fence or wall. This mainly applies to increasing their height.

This policy was utilised to good effect by the Council in serving an enforcement notice on a property owner who had demolished part of a wall and tarmac'd the drive. The notice required the reinstatement of the wall and the removal of the tarmac and replacement with a more suitable, permeable surface.

WEST KIRBY



Open land at the heart of the Old Village CA

The pressure to build on open land and large gardens in Conservation Areas is ever increasing. The Rectory Road fields in the Old Village are just one example of an area under threat.

Proposed as Urban Green Space in the Local Plan, the fields, with their trees and their stone built agricultural buildings are key to the character of the Conservation Area. Their loss would severely erode this.

CALDY



The Caldy Society has agreed to donate £1,000 to WGSA to help with costs fighting off developers' plans to subvert the Local Plan.

The Society has also had a very constructive meeting with their local councillors and together have been (partially) successful in getting the Council to attend to some long outstanding matters (street lighting and road drainage).

However, the Society has been very disappointed by the behaviour of the Planning dept. They have allowed sub-division of plots and failed to take action when two houses in the Conservation Area were demolished without planning permission.



Separate from but supported by the Caldy Society, the bulb planting group continue to beautify Caldy and try to keep the vegetation tidy. Sadly our previous organiser has given up running Caldy Open Gardens but happily the tradition will continue under new leadership.

FRANKBY



As a small unique rural conservation area surrounded mainly by Green Belt, Frankby Green Village appreciates the support CAW and other local groups provide us with when challenging inappropriate development in the area. This assisted us in 2022/23 with successfully opposing an inappropriate new build application which was subsequently refused by WBC. A decision that was upheld by the Planning Inspectorate in 2023. We continue working with enforcement on the ongoing issues associated with the Frankby Farm Site, with building work and a permanent caravan being placed in Green Belt.

We are also working with the councillors and the council on repairing the bus shelter on The Green, so it remains in keeping with the village, rather than replacing it with a modern yellow glass shelter. Our biggest challenge for 2023 is a new planning application which has just been submitted, that will significantly affect the Conservation Area and extended green belt area around, as it proposes the introduction of 3 holiday lets and 12 holiday

MOUNTWOOD

The Mountwood CA Society continues to endeavour to prevent erosion of our unique area of Wirral. Sympathetic restoration of tired properties is welcomed as is judicious pruning of trees however radical surgery will destroy the setting of the Conservation Area.

Regeneration of all the woodland is of paramount importance and is therefore always encouraged in order to comply with the very reasons for Mountwood's Designation as a Conservation Area. Our woodland trees contribute to the visual amenity and landscape character of the Area.

Sadly, it would appear that there are failures within the system which are letting us down with the "discipline" within the Conservation Area and we need the Council's full support, at all times, in order to produce best practice here in Mountwood.

A case in question is the Prenton Golf Club's Application for radical pruning of trees, growing within a resident's garden lying within the Conservation Area. The Club's Management Team were somewhat economical with the truth when they sought permission from Wirral Borough Council for the pruning as the trees concerned did not belong to Prenton Golf Club. Had we been advised, we would have objected to their request. Sadly the damage is done and could have been avoided.

We have subsequently received a profound apology from the Head of Enforcement/ Planning at Wirral Borough Council, assuring us that a mistake such as this will never happen again.

The CA Committee is delighted to report that many meetings, lengthy discussions and negotiations since 2017, have culminated in a wonderfully successful outcome. Senior Management at United Utilities have honoured our request for compensation, following the horrendous destruction of part of Mountwood's ancient woodland within the Water Tower site. They have also agreed that



the "Pressure Pump Kiosk" base and foundations installed in Mountwood Road are to be removed. Installation of a building, due to be the size of a single garage on the site, is now not going to take place. The daffodil bulbs and greenery have now been reinstated.

The huge input of financial support from United Utilities means that we are now in an extremely fortunate position to be able to donate some long overdue TLC to the War Memorials' Site together with hopefully, signage for our Conservation Area.

HESWALL

Two of the outstanding features of the Lower Heswall CA are its sandstone walls and its "urban Forest". The Heswall Society is extremely concerned that both these features are being incrementally degraded. This degradation is exacerbated when the Council does not pursue enforcement action when sandstone walls are illegally removed, nor when permission is given for trees to be felled because they are not visible from the highway and therefore have "no amenity value". surely the absorption of carbon provides an **amenity value**, and if not so in a legal sense, perhaps the Government should change the regulations



THIS IS NOT A HAPPY STORY!



While the Council is currently musing over whether to allow development on the Green Belt, it cheerfully gave full planning permission for building 21 modern houses, not only on the Green Belt but also within the Eastham Conservation Area.

They compounded this hypocrisy by making a gift to the club of adjacent council land to replace that taken by the Green Belt houses. On top of this they gave planning permission, contrary to the Management Plan, for a totally inappropriate-looking new clubhouse that is within the Conservation Area using the profits from the Green Belt housing development. To cap it all they closed Eastham Youth Club allowing the Council to profit by using that land for housing development and with breathtaking arrogance installed the replacement Youth Club in the new pavilion for which they had just granted permission. It makes a complete mockery of the Council's responsibility for its Conservation Areas.

What is the point of Conservation Areas for which the Council is supposed to be the guardians when they so blatantly disregard the rules they themselves have set?

The Conservation Area continues to be beset by speeding motorists and irresponsible bikers who see the 20 mph speed limit as a challenge. Even the 30 mph limit on Ferry Road is completely ignored as these thoughtless individuals charge down the lanes to their destination at the pleasant Eastham Ferry and Woods. Pets have been killed by these people who can't even be bothered to stop. Even the three fatal accidents in the last few years don't seem to have been any sort of a lesson.

In addition, HGVs from the nearby dock estate continue to infest the narrow village roads via the Peel-owned Bankfield Drive. The village pavements are narrow or don't exist and they are backed by the little white cottages that are the essence of the Conservation Area. The village has eleven listed buildings including its ancient 12th-century church. Residents and visitors take their lives in their hands whenever they dare to venture out. The Council are pledged to stop this traffic but so far they have done absolutely nothing.

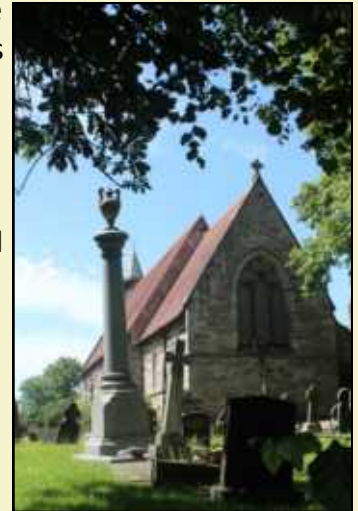
Eastham Village Preservation Association which was formed in 1970 is responsible for liaising with the Council on Conservation Area matters. It is an active organisation and is responsible for the much-admired hanging baskets that adorn the village in the summer. It is also responsible for the Safer Speed Watch group that monitors speeding traffic within the 20 mph zone. Sadly, we seem to be continually fighting and losing the battle to protect Wirral's oldest village.

BARNSTON

The Conservation Area Society has major concerns regarding the efforts by Leverhulme Estates to build on the Green Belt. There are also the outstanding issues with the semis in Barnston Road, across from Storeton Lane.

One property was developed about two years ago but the developer did not follow the agreed plans for which they had been given permission. The Society was told that the enforcement officer was looking into it but so far nothing seems to have happened and the house remains empty.

The other house has had some of the agreed work done but it looks as if this has now stopped and the property appears in a sorry state. The Society sought advice from CAW some while ago and received helpful suggestions but so far the Council has failed to take any action. The appearance of the properties does have a negative impact upon the Conservation Area in the Society's view.



PORT SUNLIGHT

Following many years of encouragement and desire by the local community and politicians to have Port Sunlight's importance recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, a bid was submitted in July 2022. The bid was in response to the UK Government's open call and put together by Port Sunlight Village Trust, with support from strategic partners Wirral Council, National Museums Liverpool and Unilever. This included consultation with Port Sunlight's communities as well as significant research, which formed the basis of the bid. By being chosen to join the list, it was hoped to have Port Sunlight recognised amongst other similar worker settlements such as Saltaire and New Lanark.

Despite the news that Port Sunlight has not been selected for the UK's new Tentative List, the research and collaboration with the community and stakeholders that went into shaping the bid has been incredibly valuable in understanding Port Sunlight's importance, both in the past and today. We will continue to build on this and ensure Port Sunlight remains an inspiring and accessible place to live, work and visit for generations to come.

We would like to thank our community, stakeholders, visitors and strategic partners – Wirral Council, National Museums Liverpool and Unilever – for their support. Our belief in Port Sunlight's global value has not been diminished and we will continue to protect and promote the village, which played such an influential role in the development of healthy, beautiful communities for working class people around the world.

We would also like to sincerely congratulate Birkenhead Park on their successful bid to be added to the UK's Tentative List. It's a big moment for the Wirral, not only for the area's heritage to be recognised globally but also for our local communities who care so deeply about the special places on their doorstep.



THORNTON HOUGH



Thornton Hough Conservation Area is now overseen by Thornton Hough Community Trust whose pressing concern is the preservation of the green belt that surrounds the Conservation Area.

Leverhulme Estates did resubmit plans to develop a Retirement Complex at the gateway to the village APP/20/01665 but this application was invalid and therefore no further progress was made with it. However we do not think for one minute it has gone away — merely “resting” for the time being.

St George’s church is closed and up for sale with Eddisons estate agents. Sealed bids were required by 1 December 2022 and we suspect a purchaser has been identified but we have no further information except to say that the property is still advertised on Rightmove.

The Trust struggles to enforce the HGV ban through the village for vehicles heading to and from the Aldi RDC on Chester High Road but any offenders who are sighted are reported to the company – sadly this is becoming a full time job!

At present The Trust is involved with WHP Telecoms who want to site a 15m monopole with associated street furniture on the grass verge at the entrance to the estate in the village around Radley/Eton Drive. This site is in close proximity to residential properties and was dismissed as unsuitable in an earlier application but it would now appear, despite everything remaining the same, that the site is suitable!

HAMILTON SQUARE

Hamilton Square Conservation Area (HSCA) is at the heart of the Birkenhead Regeneration Area within the submitted Local Plan. HSCA has secured funding from Historic England (HE) for a heritage led regeneration plan, which will include updating the current appraisal prepared in 2006.

The Conservation Area and its wider setting are covered in a Birkenhead Design Guide dealing with both development and the public realm and this will inform Design Strategies for the Area making the public realm more friendly for pedestrians and cyclists. A package of public realm works is to take place from several funding sources including HE through Wirral’s status as a Tier 1 authority in the levelling up agenda. These will include Argyle Street and the Conway Street junction, the corners of the Square and the link towards Woodside with a new public area to help movement of pedestrians and cyclists whilst enhancing the street scene.



Enforcement work is ongoing, including on the disfiguring satellite dishes facing the Square.

BROMBOROUGH POOL



A lively meeting of Bromborough Pool residents on the 2nd of May 2023, called to voice concerns about a planning proposal from a local football club, saw a general consensus to form a Conservation Area Committee. Bromborough Pool is second only to Saltaire as England's oldest Industrial Village, which preceded Lever's Port Sunlight by 30 years.

It is the only Conservation Area in Wirral that has the added protection afforded by an Article 4 Direction. This removes most permitted development rights that are applicable in all of Wirral's other 25 Conservation Areas.

Bromborough Pool is a very special and under-appreciated Conservation Area. It boasts a wonderful cricket pitch at its centre which is surrounded by the Village School, the Church and the Community Hall. With its rugged 19th century, terraced housing specially constructed for the workers at Prices' Candles it is an ideal complement to the picture postcard village of Port Sunlight. It has been neglected for years but now the residents are determined to reverse that trend and ensure that the Bromborough Pool Conservation Area gets the respect and attention that it merits.

If ever an area needed a Conservation Area Advisory Committee, then Bromborough Pool must rank in the highest echelon and its residents are about to correct this state of affairs.

AND IN CONCLUSION

We noted in the introduction to this report the productive relationship between CAW and Wirral Council. This was particularly evident in our discussion about the content of the Local Plan. However, you will note that in the reports from colleagues in a number of the Conservation Areas at the ground level the picture is more problematic and less satisfactory.

A wide range of problems have been highlighted ranging from threats to the treescape in Mountwood CA to a continuing concern about the condition of sandstone walls and trees in Lower Heswall CA. In addition the rural idyll of Frankby village CA is facing another attempt to build 3 holiday lets and 12 holiday cottages in the area. This will be contested by local residents supported by CAW.

Enforcement of planning approvals is an often quoted issue and has been particularly prominent in respect of two properties in Barnston CA. Other issues highlighted in the text in Thornton Hough CA and Eastham CA re the siting of telecoms equipment and Green Belt development. Saughall Massie's CA's village and rural character is also under constant pressure to change the use and develop the surrounding agricultural fields.

CAW would be more content if the scale of these threats to the character of many of the Conservation Areas were alleviated. We will be making objections and supporting these areas to achieve a satisfactory outcome.

Alan Chape
Chairman: Conservation Areas Wirral

THE LATEST NEWS FROM WGSA

WIRRAL'S LOCAL PLAN AND THE LEVERHULME ESTATES APPLICATIONS APPEALS/INQUIRY

WGSA (Wirral's Green Space Alliance) Steering Group and Advisers have been working hard to prepare for the imminent Local Plan (LP) Examination round-table discussions ('Hearings') and have had to take on board also preparing to take part in the 8 Appeals which have been lodged by Leverhulme Estates (LE) following Refusals of all their extensive Green Belt Applications for over 1,000 new large houses (in just Phase 1 !!). The Appeals have been consolidated within a single Public Inquiry but are treated separately.



The timing of the Appeals intervention is most likely not accidental but seeks to have the matter of 'Housing Need' (numbers), which properly should be considered within the wider context of a Local Plan Examination, pre-empted by a narrower, more adversarial Appeal process where there would be no consideration of where best any new housing should be located across Wirral, just what the Leverhulme Estates Proposals could deliver.

Because of the clash of these two Processes and the involvement of the same parties and individuals in both, the Local Plan Examination has been split into two 'Blocks' with a pause between 'Blocks' to allow the LE Appeals/Inquiry to proceed. In WGSA's view this is very far from ideal. Various Groups, individuals and the Council are attempting to have either the Appeals/Inquiry delayed until after the LP Examination and any 'Main Modifications' are concluded (the preferred scenario), or the Appeals/Inquiry to be heard but halted before being Determined (pending the outcome of the LP Examination), or the Appeals/Inquiry to be 'Called In' by the Secretary of State, Michael Gove MP.

Several of the WGSA Groups, their Members and the General Public have expressed similar concern to the Council, Local Councillors, MPs and Secretary of State, Michael Gove MP. The most recent intervention has come via the Saughall Massie Conservation Area Society whose Chairman, Les Spencer spoke to Dame Angela Eagle, their MP. In response, she has written to Michael Gove MP asking him to "call in" the matter for his consideration.

Thanks on behalf of all the members of CAW and WGSA must go to John Heath Chair (Planning Rep of ITPAS/WGSA Convenor), Prof David Gregg, Hilary Ash of Wirral Wildlife, and Jackie Copley our Planning Consultant/Wirral Society/CPRE who are working tirelessly to deliver a Local Plan suiting the real needs of Wirral and protecting Wirral's Green Belt fields.

(WGSA — Wirral's Green Space Alliance — is made up of members of different groups from across Wirral including representatives of CAW and similar like-minded societies, all united in the single aim of protecting Wirral's Green Belt land)

CONSERVATION AREAS WIRRAL

Income & Expenditure Account for the year ended 31 December 2022

	2022	2021
	£	£
Income		
Donation from Friends of Flaybrick	50.00	50.00
Talks given by Mrs Gillian Bolt	50.00	170.00
Funds raised from walk by Mrs Gillian Bolt	-	64.00
Wirral Society Donation - towards Website redesign	250.00	-
Total Income	350.00	284.00
 Expenditure		
Website costs	-	266.33
Membership fee - Civic Voice	-	50.00
Table at Heritage Fair	10.00	-
Total Expenditure	10.00	316.33
 Surplus/Deficit for the year	340.00	-32.33

Balance Sheet as at 31 December 2022

	2022	2021
	£	£
Current Assets/Liabilities		
Lloyds Bank - current account	4,965.25	4,585.25
Sums receivable Talk given by Mrs Gillian Bolt	-	40.00
	-	-
Net Current Assets	4,965.25	4,625.25
 Represented by:		
Funds brought forward	4,625.25	4,657.58
Surplus/Deficit for the year	340.00	-32.33
Total Funds	4,965.25	4,625.25

John Pyke

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Approved by the Treasurer - John Pyke

Independent Examiner's Statement

I have examined the records maintained by the Treasurer and confirm that the above accounts are in accordance therewith.

Robert G Lewis

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Robert G Lewis, Retired, Formerly Finance Executive
14 April 2023