

Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council.

Draft Conservation Area Appraisal.

The Magazines, Wallasey - A proposal to designate a Conservation Area.



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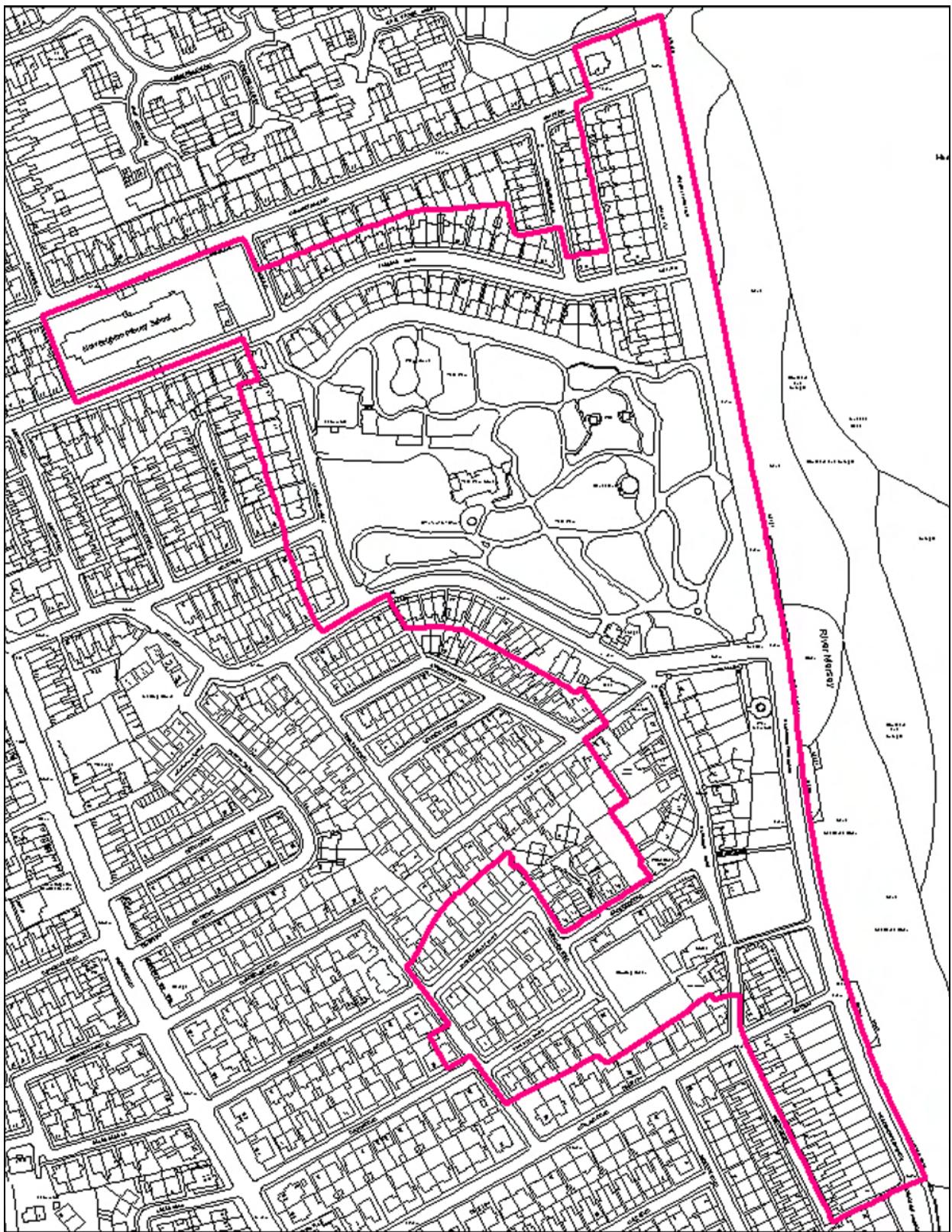
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1.1 Introduction.

The Purpose of the Appraisal.

English Heritage, England's national consultancy for the historic environment, encourages all local authorities to produce conservation area appraisals as a tool for managing the interests of the built heritage as part of an integrated policy at a local and strategic level. They are statements of a locality's special character and significance and can help to shape policy and implementation programmes that will help protect and enhance that character for future generations.

The appraisal has been prepared because the local authority has recognised the significance of the area as a physical document of urban change within the Wirral over the past three hundred years and intends to explore the possibilities for the designation of a conservation area which covers the site of the former powder magazines and their environs.

Community Involvement.

The Magazines Conservation Society, a local interest group based within the appraisal area, took the initiative to produce their own conservation area appraisal in 2002 (with additional input from the Council's conservation section) on which this document is loosely based, and there is believed to be significant local support for the formal designation of a conservation area. The Council would like to acknowledge and thank the members of the Society and other individuals who have contributed to the publication of this document. Wirral Council aspires to develop stronger links with this and other local amenity groups in the future in order to make its work in conservation more effective and meaningful to the local community.

Scope of the Appraisal.

This appraisal draws upon a range of documentary material, including historical maps, and other appraisals prepared by private individuals and the aforementioned Society over the past eight years. Its purpose is not to provide an exhaustive survey of the area's historical, archaeological and architectural interest but rather to summarise its special character in general terms, pointing out individually significant structures where necessary to illustrate a particular subject or theme.

Omission of one building or group of structures should not be taken to mean that they are not in any way significant or important to the locality's identity. The writer has undertaken a photographic survey of the area in mid-2005, and all photographs reproduced here derive from that survey. It is hoped that future surveys will be undertaken as part of a management plan in order to gauge the effectiveness of conservation policies operating in the locality.

1.2 Conservation Policy.

Conservation Area Designation – The Implications

The statutory definition of a conservation area is “an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”, according to the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Designation of a conservation area affects all those who own, occupy or manage property within the defined area. The principal effects of designation may be summarised as:

- the local planning authority is under a general duty to ensure the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas, and under a particular duty to prepare proposals to that end;
- the local authority (or the Secretary of State) may be able to take steps to ensure that a building in a conservation area is kept in good repair;
- the details as to the limits of what works may be carried out without planning permission are different to elsewhere (see below);
- conservation area consent is required for the demolition of any unlisted building greater in volume than 115 cu m within the area. Conservation area consent is publicised differently to planning applications;
- the planning authority must take into account the desirability of preserving and enhancing the character of the area when determining applications for planning permission and conservation area consent;
- notice must be given to the local authority before works are carried out to any tree in the area (see below);
- the display of advertisements is somewhat more restricted than elsewhere.

In a residential area such as this, the main implications for householders are:

Trees in conservation areas

It is the character and appearance of conservation areas as a whole that the Council is required to preserve and enhance, not just that of the buildings within them. Major elements in the character and appearance of an area such as this are the trees and gardens belonging to the individual houses. Gardens, quite rightly, are not suitable for ‘control’ as such. However, ill-considered works to trees may not only lead to the loss of the trees themselves, but can also ruin the appearance of the area surrounding them and spoil the setting of any buildings nearby. Since this is particularly unfortunate in conservation areas – whose appearance is, by definition, both special and worth preserving – local authorities are given some powers to control works to trees. Accordingly, *anyone proposing to carry out any works to a tree that is in a conservation area must give written notice of at least six weeks to the local planning authority*. The works to be notified under this provision include the cutting down, topping, lopping or uprooting of any tree.

Limitation of ‘permitted development (pd) rights’

Conservation Area Consent is required for the substantial demolition of any structure over 115 cubic metres in volume or a boundary wall within or on the boundary of the designated area. Since conservation area consent is not needed for the erection of new buildings or for the alteration of existing ones, the need for planning permission to be obtained is the only way in which the planning authority can control works that may significantly affect the character or appearance of a conservation area. However, if the works are ‘permitted development’, then no planning application is

normally needed and the authority has no control. The limits of what is 'permitted development' within a conservation area can therefore be of considerable significance. There are, accordingly, certain differences between permitted development limits generally and those applying in conservation areas. The main provisions are that pd is withdrawn from:

- (i) the insertion of rooflights - it is customary to require the use of "conservation rooflights" that are flush with the plane of the roof, rather than standing proud of it.
- (ii) extensions to dwelling houses adding more than 10% or 50 cu m (whichever is greater) to the volume of the original building.
- (iii) the cladding of the exterior of a dwelling house with stone, artificial stone, tiles, timber or plastic.
- (iv) the alteration of the roof of a dwelling house resulting in a material alteration to its shape.
- (v) the erection of a curtilage building greater than 10 cu m - such increases in volume are then treated as though this were the enlargement of a dwelling house itself.
- (vi) the extension or alteration of industrial and warehouse buildings if they add more than 10% to the volume of the original building, or more than 500 sq m to its aggregate floorspace.
- (vii) where any school, college, university or hospital is intending to extend existing buildings, or to construct new facilities on its site, the new work must be of a similar appearance to those used for the original buildings.
- (viii) the erection of antennas on a chimney, wall or roof slope which faces onto, and is visible from, a highway on a dwelling house less than 15m in height.
- (ix) telecommunications operators must give the local authority eight weeks' notice if they intend to carry out work on their own land within a conservation area.

Further details are available from the Council's conservation and planning sections.

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Policy Development.

Part of the objective of the appraisal is to identify areas of the locality which afford particular opportunities for recreation or whose fabric or interest is being unduly diminished through neglect or adverse alteration / redevelopment, and to suggest the scope for implementing initiatives or changes in policy that would improve the situation. This aspect is formalised in section 71 of the 1990 Planning Act 1990 above, which states that the local authority is under an obligation to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas. Importantly, the appraisal is a first step in informing the development of a management plan for the locality which will help it adapt to the challenges of urban change and development in the long-term.

The emerging framework of local policy

According to recent literature distributed by the government, 'Conservation area appraisals, like conservation plans, depend upon an understanding of the area which draws upon techniques of conservation-based research and analysis. Conservation area appraisals could also, like conservation plans, include a more specific assessment of significance and some analysis of how

that significance is vulnerable as the basis for defining policies for preserving or enhancing their character.'

and with regard to the prospective Local Development Framework: 'Local Authorities now produce *local development frameworks* (LDFs), which consist of *development plan documents* (DPDs), which form part of the statutory development plan; *supplementary planning documents* (SPDs), which expand policies set out in a DPD; and the local authority's *statement of community involvement* (SCI). *Area action plans* (AAPs), which focus on short-term implementation, can be used within the LDF to provide the planning framework for areas where significant change or conservation is needed. All local development documents must be subject to *sustainability appraisal* (SA), incorporating the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (SEA) and need to be included in the local authority's *local development scheme* (LDS).

1.3 Summary of Special Interest.

The Magazines is an area of New Brighton close to the sea that possesses a richness and diversity of historic and architectural interest which, within such a small area, is arguably unparalleled elsewhere in the borough of Wirral. Its significance derives from its status as a physical document of urban change over the past three centuries, allied to a strong and tangible character of a maritime settlement developing in close proximity to one of the greatest ports of industrial Europe.

The core of the village of the Magazines is a small collection of buildings dating back to Jacobean times and forming a small fishing village close to the edge of the estuary. To the north is Vale Park: a piece of common land which was later enclosed to form a public park. Surrounding these two elements is a profusion of buildings that represents a fairly sustained phase of urban development and re-development in the period 1850 to almost the present day. In addition the area contains a series of interesting landmarks and spaces that add further interest. The strong character of the area thus derives not from any particular set of buildings but from the rich mixture of different building styles and the valuable amenity of the area's various open spaces.

1.4 Location and Setting.

The appraisal area lies midway between Egremont and New Brighton in the district of Wallasey on the west bank of the Mersey estuary, and looks across to Liverpool - the most significant city in the region. The settlement was formed on a hillside of red sandstone which tumbles down to the shoreline that is now bordered by a broad Promenade. The appraisal area blends into the larger conurbation of Wallasey and its border has been drawn so as to include only the village core and the most interesting examples of the area's urban development from fishing village to residential suburb.

Boundary of the Conservation Area

The boundary of the appraisal area has been drawn tightly around those areas of the settlement that relate specifically to its early development and the local amenities of Vale Park and its interface with Magazines Promenade. The areas around Fort Street, Nelson Street and Lichfield Street, although they relate historically to the development of the Magazines, have reluctantly had to be discounted from the appraisal area due to the extent of adverse alteration to individual properties in the post-war period - e.g. pebble dashing, render, loss of original joinery and boundary features. Such is the cumulative effect of the small changes that the antiquity of some properties is barely discernible.

Some of the information in this appraisal relates to areas outside the appraisal boundary which are related to the development of the Magazines, and which were the subject of consideration for inclusion into the proposed conservation area, but later not included.

2.0 Origins and Development of the settlement.

Prior to the industrial revolution the appraisal area, and indeed most of Wirral outside its towns, was largely undeveloped - the main activities in this locality being fishing and agriculture. Various local legends mention the activity of "wrecking" whereby ships were reportedly lured onto dangerous rocks in order to wreck them and rid them of their precious cargoes as they approached Liverpool port. It is likely however that these rumours are fanciful and that local people were merely the opportunist recipients of goods from ships that had foundered on the rocks. As the port of Liverpool began to expand rapidly in the seventeenth century objections were raised in relation to the storage of ships' gunpowder (which was required to be unloaded before the ships went into their berth) in the Brownlow Hill area of the city, due to the pressure for development and parochial safety concerns.

The Port of Liverpool purchased the site close to Liscard Vale and constructed the underground chambers of the powder magazines which were reportedly well used during the century of their operation from 1751 to 1851. In the latter year, because of increasing disquiet about the large volumes of powder being stored on the site and its proximity to new housing, the magazines were moved to floating hulks further down the estuary between New Ferry and Eastham. The magazine site later came to be occupied by properties in Lichfield Street and Aylesbury Road.

In 1858, because of the strategic position of the village which looked over the estuary towards the docks of north Liverpool, it was decided to construct the Liscard Battery, complete with a small garrison colony, on a site overlooking the seafront. However, after not many years it became clear that the fortification at Fort Perch Rock at the New Brighton headland would provide sufficient security for the entrance to the Mersey estuary ports. The battery was finally abandoned in 1912 after long years of disuse.

From the middle of the nineteenth century several waves of new mass construction in and around this (and the other seaside towns) of the Wirral engulfed the village and changed it from a unitary settlement into a part of the extensive Wallasey conurbation. The centre of Liverpool, with its frenetic industrial and mercantile activity, was becoming an entirely unpleasant environment in which to live and the advent of new ferry and rail links with the land on the other side of the estuary allowed the professional classes to locate to the less polluted and more tranquil setting of Wirral seaside towns.

Importantly, the village core of the Magazines was not swept away by these new developments - the older buildings and road patterns were absorbed into the expanding networks of streets and terraces which catered for everyone from the lower- to the upper middle classes. By the middle of the twentieth century virtually the whole area was covered by domestic housing.

Morphological development.

The historic core of the settlement is the small hamlet that sits on Magazine Brow close to the seafront. This contains a small selection of whitewashed stone and later brick houses on Magazine Brow (the main thoroughfare through the settlement) that appear on earlier maps - for example Bennison's map of 1835 - see Maps 1 & 2. This map shows exactly how rural and marginal the landscape around the Magazines was at this time, although the newly engineered layout of James

Atherton's New Brighton foretold the urbanisation that was to sweep across this part of the Wirral.

The Magazines are visible in the centre of the village, surrounded predominantly by fields. This map also indicates a Hotel, now vanished but replaced by the nearby Magazine Hotel, a lifeboat station on the site of the remains of the battery and Liscard Vale together with Vale House (unnamed). The Tithe Map of 1841 (Map 3) shows a similar picture.

The access to the village was either from the sea and slipway itself or down from Magazine Lane which connected at the top of the hill with Rake Lane at the eastern limit of Liscard. Other parts of the hamlet were connected by small paths - for example Marine Cottages on the seafront to the south. Marine Terrace - a set of plush villas on the seafront adjoining the pre-existing Marine Cottages was next to develop.

When the powder magazines fell out of use in 1851, the land on (or under) which they stood was sold by City of Liverpool and was named "Magazine Park". Grand houses in Fort Street and Nelson Street were built from the 1860s onwards.

Housing was first developed along the South side of Fort Street, overlooking Magazine Park, with development of the park itself following later. Although all the streets in this area contain historic buildings of merit and their development was linked to the redundancy of the powder magazines, the majority of those along Fort Street and Nelson Street in particular have suffered such a high degree of unsympathetic alteration over the years that it was simply not possible to include them in the proposed area.

The construction of Seabank Road and its tramway in the late nineteenth century prompted a further expansion in building, leading to the construction of more housing in a more regular gridiron pattern along Holland Road, Orrell Road and other streets. By this time, the greater conurbation of East Wirral had really arrived and it was ever more difficult to distinguish boundaries between the various township that now blurred together as one.

The first edition Ordnance Survey Map of the 1870s (Map 4) shows the settlement starting to develop beyond a mere rural backwater, with the construction of houses around the perimeter of Magazine Park and along the shore as Marine Terrace is established. The second edition of the 1890s shows a far more recognisably urban settlement, especially as regards the formation of streets such Holland Road and Dalton Roads running down at 90° from the main thoroughfare of Seabank Road (see Map 5).

In the early years of the twentieth century, expansion of the urban fabric further filled in the gaps with the construction of Vaughan Road and Dalmorton Road leading down to the new Magazine Promenade (constructed in the 1890s) and Oakland Vale. Edwardian pressed brick and Terracotta housing was built along Lichfield Street and Aylesbury Rd on the site of the powder magazines, as were they along Woodland Drive overlooking the recently enclosed landscape of Vale Park.

Garden-city style suburban houses followed in Brackenhurst and Berkley Drives in the 1920s, and there was some post-war rebuilding in Magazine Lane. The only modern cul-de-sac development is Newhaven Road at the top of Mariners Road.

Local services and shopping were provided at the top of the settlement on Seabank Road.

The core of the village around Magazine Brow is low rise and fairly informal, with buildings presenting themselves to the street at odd angles. The road narrows and then broadens out at various points along its length providing a more interesting experience for the pedestrian as they walk around the area. It is easy to imagine its origins as a thread-like track winding its way along a terrace of land and linking the various houses of the hamlet together. The sizes of plots and buildings are varied here and the buildings themselves constructed in a variety of styles and materials.

This is in great contrast to the very much more regular plan of later building, whose aspect becomes progressively more ordered and regimented in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The majority of later roads are straight, or as straight as the layout of existing property boundaries and earlier housing allows them to be. For example, Holland Road (circa 1880) leads directly down from Seabank Road to Marine Terrace with barely any linear deviation. Although built later, Vaughan Road sweeps around the undulating boundary of Vale Park to present an attractively curving avenue of similar houses as they lead down towards the seafront.



Plate 1 - Vaughan Road

Likewise, the regular Edwardian terraces of Lichfield Street and Aylesbury Road are bent and curved in order to fill the remainder of the undeveloped irregularly shaped plot of the former powder magazines. The pressure for land in this area during the years of the early twentieth century has precluded anything more than a small garden for the new lower middle class inhabitants of these houses.

3.0 Landscape Setting.

Although the area of the Magazines is now a part of the greater Wallasey conurbation, it is still possible to imagine how it must have looked as a small fishing hamlet prior to the area's development in the industrial period. Since the later development was never so intensive as to sweep away all the pre-existing buildings and green spaces, some attractive landscaping remains in the area. The setting of the appraisal area is primarily influenced by its topography. The land slopes from the ridge running down this side of the Wirral to the sea at varying degrees of steepness, over the whole area. The primary housing in the area along Magazine Brow appears to have formed at a natural terrace in the slope, with steeper slopes being developed later on.

It is possible from many points in the appraisal area to overlook the Mersey estuary and to view the coming and going of ships of all types and sizes. The lack at present of any high-rise development, and the fairly constant slope of the land at a medium gradient down to the sea across the appraisal area aids this feature and helps retain the maritime character. It is hoped that conservation area status will help to preserve the feel of a seaside village in the longer-term by resisting any pressure for high-rise development that could block views down to the estuary.

Vale Park.

This land is the area's premier open space for outdoor recreation, whose network of sinuous paths lead down to the promenade bordered by a series of planted mature trees and shrubs (see plate 2). It appears on maps of the area dating back to the early nineteenth century as Liscard Common - an area of common land later parcelled off into private hands and renamed Liscard Vale.

In 1898 the land was bought by the Council in order to create a park for the enjoyment of the area's burgeoning population. Vale Park opened in 1899, and its borders remain today as then. The park contains Vale House, constructed circa 1830 and later extended. It was owned for fifty years by Charles Holland, a Liverpool merchant who travelled widely, gathering botanical specimens that were planted in the park. This planting has helped to create a high degree of arboreal diversity as evidenced by the existence within the park of the following species:

Wych Elm, Field Maple, Hornbeam, London plane, Lime, Oak, Horse Chestnut, Sweet Chestnut, Beech, Turkey Oak, Holm Oak, Whitebeam, Weeping Ash, Yew, Macrocarpa, Atlantic Cedar, Pine, Red Oak, Weeping Elm, Ash, Weeping Ash, White Poplar, Holly, Norwegian Maple, Bird Cherry, Willow, Silver Maple, Fig, Mulberry, Scots Pine, Tree of Heaven.

Following the departure of the Holland family, Vale House accommodated park staff and was restored in 1993 as part of its conversion into a community centre and cafe. The cafe is well used today and acts as a meeting place within the park - see plate 3. Vale Park is protected by the Wirral MB Council UDP policy GR1 - The Protection of Urban Green Space. It is also listed as a Site of Biological Interest.

The bandstand was constructed in 1926 to the design of Zwinger, and the ground sloping down to it creates a semi-natural auditorium where a variety of concerts are held in the summer months. Although the park gets very busy on hot days in summer, it is well patronised in winter also by dog walkers and others.



Plate 2 - Vale Park

Magazine Promenade.

The promenade was constructed in the 1890s as it was extended from Seacombe to New Brighton. This attachment to the promenade helps define the Magazines as a seaside settlement and provides an important pedestrian and cycle-based linkage with other parts of Wirral's Mersey seafront. The amenity of the prom is very much enhanced through the designation of the Wirral Coastal Route Cycleway which prohibits vehicular traffic.

The prom affords superb views of the north Liverpool docks, the Liverpool waterfront, the coming and going of ships, of the seaside architecture in the vicinity and the ebbing and flowing of the tides (Plate 3). Prior to demolition in 1920 the northern section of the promenade would have been dominated by the 621 ft high steel lattice of New Brighton Tower.

Between Holland and Dalmorton Roads, in between the terraces of housing and the promenade lies a buffer of grass sward which gives the prom a greener aspect and adds to the impression of space. These areas of grass, formerly known as The Magazine Promenade Plantations, are also protected by policy GR2. The height of the sea wall has been raised in recent years to include a wave wall whose purpose is to force water back into the sea and prevent it from inundating the sea frontage through the rapid drainage of sea spray.

There is a further area of green space in front of the Magazine Hotel which contains some trees and allows one to look out towards the estuary from the pub and Magazine Brow. The bowling green adjacent to Braehaven Road provides important amenity space within the dense urban fabric of the upper reaches of the settlement.

In addition to these organised areas of open space, many houses in the conservation area contain small to medium-sized gardens, in general well maintained, which add a pleasingly vegetated aspect to the settlement.



Plate 3 - Magazine Promenade

4.0 Archaeological Significance and Potential of the area.

The earliest maps of the locality from the early to mid-nineteenth century show most of the area to have been divided into burgage plots (standardised unit of mediaeval land division), e.g. Bennison's map of 1835. A number of other buildings still standing within the appraisal area also appear, e.g. nos. 17-21 Magazine Brow, whilst one or two of the buildings appearing on the maps have since been lost, e.g. Dr Poggi's New Brighton College school building in front of Vale Park.

The writer knows of no pre-Jacobean remains surviving or ascribed to within the appraisal area, aside from reports of a Roman coin discovered on the banks of the Mersey estuary close to Vale Park. However, physical evidence of human activity stretching back into prehistory has turned up over much of north Wirral in recent years and remains may lie hidden in the vicinity. The aforementioned collection of fishermen's cottages on Magazine Brow is almost certainly the original nucleus of the settlement from which the village developed further in line with the greater demand for seaside living.

The central piece of above-ground archaeology within the appraisal area is undoubtedly the imposing gates of the Liscard Battery. There are no scheduled ancient monuments within the appraisal area, and the Battery entrance is the sole building on the government's register of buildings of special architectural or historic interest, listed grade II. The interior of the battery is now largely covered by 1930s development, whilst the stone walled boundary of the battery is largely complete.

Because of their early origins within the settlement, nos. 21-27 Magazine Brow are identified in the historic Environment Record as structures of Archaeological Importance, as is no. 110 Vale Drive (The Roundhouse).



Plate 4 - The Liscard battery

The 1841 tithe map and Bennison's 1835 map both show the powder magazines, which were likely to have been stoutly constructed chambers, sat within the ground and separated from each other by earthen buffers in order to minimise the risk of an explosion in one chamber from setting off a chain reaction. The extent of any underground remains of the powder magazines has not formally been ascertained.

Stone for the battery is likely to have been quarried locally, in common with that of the other early stone buildings in the village. From the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, due to improvements in the transport of materials, buildings in the Magazines were invariably of brick, occasionally with stone dressings.

Particularly in situations close to the area occupied by the former powder magazines any development involving significant below ground excavation site operations should be preceded by an archaeological assessment. An archaeological consultation should also be undertaken in the case of any development proceeding in the area around the historic core of the village around Magazine Brow, and in selected other locations as may be recommended by the Merseyside Archaeological Officer.

5.0 Architectural Character.

Stylistically, building design becomes more homogenised over time. Almost all of the early structures are individually constructed and many are fairly basic structures whose vernacular form is determined by the materials available and the necessities of living and working rather than the niceties of fashion, e.g. Eve's Cottage, which is said to date from the 1670s. This basic structure is stone-built and whitewashed to protect it from the weather. It is a simple cottage of no pretension whose regular plan form and pattern of openings allows it to imprint some small sense of polite domestication on what must have been a wild and rather desolate location.



Plate 5 - Eve's cottage, ca. 1670.



Some of the developments from the Victorian period are also quite individual - for example no. 3 Fort Street, constructed in the 1880s, is built in an early Arts & Crafts style. The property blends into its surroundings in terms of its materials, scale and proportions but also stands out in terms of its quality and strength of character.

Plate 6 - no. 3 Fort Street

There are other more individual developments of pairs of houses from the Victorian era scattered around and just outside the appraisal area - for

example some built on Holland Road. In the Edwardian period, the ability of lower class individuals to move out of crowded housing in the centre of town led to the construction of long lines of two-storey pressed brick, London Brick and terracotta terraces, whose simple robust design has allowed them to weather the march of time comparatively well, for example those in the upper reaches of Magazine Lane.



Plate 7 - 18 Berkley Drive

The increasing standardisation of Edwardian housing inevitably led to a reaction as people began to aspire to a softer and less urban style of housing. The houses in Brackenhurst and Berkley Drives, built in the inter-war years display a distinct Arts & Crafts suburban styling with leaded window panes, enclosed porches and broad gables. By the beginning of the second world war the majority of the area of the Magazines village had been developed, apart from the green spaces mentioned above. The most recent medium-sized development of housing was in the 1960s towards the top of Mariners Road.

Various vacant sites have seen more recent development with quasi-traditional structures - for example some newer properties of Magazine Brow.

Materials

The palette of materials used in the Magazines is fairly typical of building technologies used down the ages in the Wirral. The earlier buildings in the core of the village are constructed from locally available stone and are generally whitewashed. Several of those buildings that were later altered were rendered and later whitewashed. The majority of the buildings from the mid- to late nineteenth century are of brick, often with stone dressings to form lintels, sills and doorsteps.

Pebbledash is also much in evidence as a facing material - either in order to obscure the use of stock brick as walling - or to form a cheap and durable cladding that was less prone than stone to damage from the salty air of the coast. This latter cladding material is most in evidence from the early twentieth century onwards. Also introduced towards the end of the nineteenth century is the phenomenon of black-and-white wooden panel cladding - particularly in the upper storey and gables of buildings - a product of the revival in interest at that time in mediaeval and Tudor building.



Plate 8, 106-108 Magazine Lane

Terracotta and high quality pressed brick are much in evidence across the appraisal area, and are extremely typical of the North West of England's traditional building heritage. As the early years of the twentieth century progressed, people demanded a move away from swathes of orange brick housing and buff coloured London brick began to make an appearance - for example terrace housing in Vale Drive.

In terms of roofing materials, it is likely that the earliest buildings were thatched, either with reed, straw or local heather and bracken, or were perhaps covered with stone slates. As sea transport improved and slate mines began to be extensively exploited in Snowdonia and Cumbria, the lighter, durable and more regular material of slate began to supplant the earlier materials on the Wirral. Its lightness permitted the use of less substantial roof timbers, and its resistance to water ingress allowed the use of shallower roof pitches. Due to the relative ease of transporting slate from Snowdonia, the Wirral did not see the large scale supplanting of slate by clay tiles that occurred in other parts of the country, although it remains popular in the Borough.

Liverpool's status as a great port derived partly from its huge timber importing and processing activity, often referred to as "Timber Town" historically. Much of the North West possesses a wealth of fine joinery, and the Magazines is no exception. Much of the timber imported into local ports was sourced from the Baltic, Ireland, Scotland and North America and is extremely durable. Consequently, several original timber sash windows and handmade glass survive within the area. Some Victorian and Edwardian properties possess impressive timber bargeboards with finials, and many may retain impressive internal joinery also.

The North West has a tradition of metalworking to rival that of The Midlands, and many of the mid- and later Victorian houses would have had their front boundary walls topped by iron railings once built. Sadly, a government edict requiring the removal of railings for the war effort in 1941-2 caused the loss of boundary railings on private residences in the Magazines and indeed across the whole of the UK. Nevertheless, vestiges of historic railing ironwork remain on one or two properties in the area:



Plate 9 - cast iron railings, no. 1 Marine Terrace



Plate 10 - Cast iron railings, Magazines Promenade

6.0 Character Zones - see Map 7 for the setting out of the zones.

It is difficult indeed to divide any locality as architecturally mixed as the Magazines into neat character zones. However, it is possible to link different parts of the appraisal area to particular phases of building that illustrate varying aspects of urban development over the ages. The logical place to start in terms of defining different areas in the Magazines is the historic village core on Magazine Brow. The boundaries between these zones are of course blurred, and are not intended to describe rigid separations.

The Historic Core

This portion of the village is characterised not just by its buildings, but also by the irregular orientation of its buildings and spaces. Walking from Holland Road on to Magazine Brow the road narrows perceptibly as one approaches the Magazine Hotel, subsequently widening out again to reach its broadest point at the junction with Mariners Road. The cottages of nos. 17-21 Magazine Brow are set at an oblique angle to the road, which may, or may not, relate to the orientation of the burgage plots with which they were originally associated.

This zone also includes the surviving remains of the Liscard battery with its turreted gatehouse. It is when one is walking in this zone that one can appreciate most clearly the humble and ancient origins of the settlement. The jumble of buildings and spaces around them create a sense of intimacy and piecemeal, organic development over time.



plate 11 - Magazine Brow, looking North

The Maritime Zone

This sector of the appraisal area is most clearly related to the growing demand from the early nineteenth for a century or more for housing those workers and businessmen who worked in the nearby conurbations of Birkenhead and Liverpool during the day but preferred not to live there the rest of the time. However, the

development in this zone demonstrates not merely the fashion for suburban seaside living, but the advances in local and national transportation that made it feasible.

Development in this zone commences in the early nineteenth century with the construction of "Marine Cottages" - now nos 13-14 Marine Terrace, followed over the remainder of the nineteenth century by the building of the remainder of the terrace, and the construction of further terraces like Pengwern Terrace and (later) Oakland Vale. Marine Terrace is a mixture of complementary but different mid- and late Victorian villas, largely in stucco, towering over the Promenade.

This zone also contains areas of green like the strips of green sward in front of some of the terraces, this green aspect being reinforced by the way in which Vale Park reaches right up to the Promenade. The aspect of the prom has been much improved through its closure to vehicular traffic, optimising its amenity and allowing everybody to enjoy views over the Mersey and back to the seafront terraces without the irritation of cars etc.

Overall, the character is modest grandeur, with colourful seaside buildings overlooking the Mersey estuary with gardens in front giving an impression of spaciousness and recreation.



Plate 12 - Nos. 13-15 Marine Terrace

Other significant terraces in the area are Pengwern Terrace, constructed in polychrome brickwork between 1875 and the turn of the century, and Oakland Vale - a formal Edwardian development in pebbledash and pressed brick.

Suburban Housing Zone

After the construction of Seabank Road in the late nineteenth century, a network of roads running down to the Mersey seafront in the Magazines could be formed. As the settlement was ever more closely linked with the neighbouring conurbations of Birkenhead and Liverpool, substantial suburban houses were able to be constructed down the sides of new roads. The new housing colonising the former location of the powder magazines in Fort Street and Nelson Street was soon followed by the building of new villas in Holland Road, Orrel Road and others.

The character of this zone in general derives from the arrangement of fairly generous houses, either within their own plot, in pairs or as part of a terraced development. The housing ranges from substantial Victorian properties such as no. 1 Orrell Road, to the Edwardian houses of Vaughan Road, and the garden suburb style developments of Berkeley and Brackenhurst Drives.



Plate 13 - Berkeley Drive, looking Southwest



Plate 14 - Vaughan Road, looking East

Modern infill buildings appear within the confines of the redundant Liscard Battery from the inter-war to the post-war period, which generally fit relatively well into the townscape and borrow design cues from other buildings in the locality.



Plate 15 - Infill development, Magazine Brow

Because of its sheer size and significance within the area Vale Park is arguably a zone in its own right, and does indeed operate as such because of its distinct landscape and the particular activities that take place there.

7.0 Local vistas

The Magazines is itself quite a picturesque locality and contains a variety of vantage points from which attractive views of buildings and spaces may be realised.

However, the most impressive views are those of the Mersey Estuary which can be glimpsed at various points within the area, but is most strongly appreciated from Magazine Promenade and the houses and spaces immediately adjacent. The winding form of Magazine Brow also creates some interesting views of houses of shapes and sizes that border it along its length.

The sloping ground of Vale Park affords some fine views of the park's landscaping as it falls towards the promenade, and of Vale House and Zwinger's bandstand at its centre. The sinuous, curving form of Vaughan Road provides curving views of its houses as they sweep down towards the sea, whilst the large houses of Holland Road frame long views of the Mersey along its length. When walking on the promenade, the houses along Marine Terrace, Pengwern Terrace and Oakland Vale, are ranged above to the West whilst the green spaces of Vale Park, the green swards either side and the War Memorial in front of the Liscard Battery are visible also.



Vale Park - looking towards Oakland Vale

8.0 Key Unlisted Buildings

There are virtually no buildings of sufficient quality to justify statutory listing within the appraisal area, but many important buildings that add real richness and interest to it. In addition to those buildings already mentioned, nos. 17-21 Magazine Brow are highly significant. They are made of traditional materials - thick stone walls and slate roofs, with stone quoins and sills. They are bounded by a notable low stone wall which has moulded stone copings. The buildings are likely to date from the C18th or early C19th, and some retain historic windows. Their picturesque appeal is enhanced by their front gardens, and a set of mounting steps is integrated into the wall of one cottage.



Plate 16, 19-21 Magazine Brow

The **Magazine Hotel** is a highly significant building in terms of both its historic and social value within the area. It is a three-storey rendered building, painted white, and a date-stone reading 1759 (re-sited on the later bays) is likely to be a fair representation of the present building's date of construction. The building faces the sea and is very much linked to it through the custom that it brought, and the fact that many businessmen met here socially or conducted their port-related business informally.



Plate 17 -The Magazine Hotel

We have already mentioned **Marine Terrace**, but nos. 13 & 14 are typical late Georgian villas and are significant because of their early date of construction (circa 1820-1830) and pioneering aspect of suburban living away from the clamour of nearby industrial cities.



The **Round House** is one of the most striking buildings in the area, and is reputed to have acted as a watch for the Magazines themselves, which once lay directly adjacent. The round structure is built of sandstone, whitewashed & rendered, whilst the impressive conical roof is covered by fish-tiled slates. The living accommodation is augmented by a single-storey building range that extends out into the garden, and the whole structure is a local landmark.

Plate 18 - The Round House

The local War Memorial sits in front of the Liscard battery on the promenade and is of local interest. Originally erected to commemorate the First World War, the names of those killed in WWII were added later. The monument is the work of William Bernie Rhind, eldest son of the sculptor John Rhind. Born in Edinburgh, William Rhind's best known works are his war memorials to the Royal Scots Greys, Black Watch and Kings Own Scottish Borderers - all to be found in his native city. The setting of the monument is also important, being sited on the promenade close to Vale Park, with the East wall of the battery providing a fitting backdrop to the structure.



Plate 19 - War Memorial on Magazines Promenade

Vale Park Bandstand was built in 1926 to the design of Zwinger. Though striking its circular form blends into the verdant surroundings of the park. Its distinctive domed roof is supported on Doric columns, and although the regular appearance of brass bands is now a far more sporadic phenomenon, the structure still provides the setting for a diverse programme of music at fetes in the summer months. The names of classical composers are inscribed around the base of the dome in elongated gold lettering, also including Arthur Sullivan - famous for his light operatic compositions that together with WS Gilbert's lyrics provided popular entertainment in the Victorian period.



Plate 19 - Vale Park Bandstand

Vale House is one further structure of interest, located within Vale Park. It was originally built in 1830, reportedly by a cotton broker, and later extended by the tall perpendicular wing to the East. The original building is a typically late Georgian two-storey building, and whilst both buildings are now covered by a buff render, it is conceivable that the earlier portion was once in brick. For much of the twentieth century Vale House accommodated park staff, but after many years of subsequent vacancy and neglect Wirral Council restored the building. Since 1993 the ground floor has been altered through the insertion of a modern glazed frontage to enable its function as a cafeteria. It is a thriving community amenity and is well used by local residents. One further building of interest in the park is the lodge - a finely constructed building in pebbledash, with a series of gables and slate roofs, and impressive steel arch and gate on the property boundary.

New Brighton Primary School is a fine red brick building, typical of its time and is partnered by no. 17 Vaughan Road, presumably the school caretaker's residence. Both are bordered by a traditional red brick wall, piers and railings.



Plate 20 - New Brighton Primary School and no. 17 Vaughan Road.

Dr. Poggi's Shelter where Vale Drive meets Magazine Promenade belongs to a series of traditional cast-iron columned Victorian/Edwardian shelters along the coastline of Merseyside which are typical of British seaside resorts. Possibly altered and extended, the structure is intact, but has been subject to vandalism and would benefit from refurbishment.



Plate 21 - Dr Poggi's Shelter, Magazine Promenade

9.0 Activity and Prevailing or former uses and their influence on buildings and spaces

Although for much of its recent history the settlement has been primarily a dormitory suburb for those working in the nearby metropolitan centres of Birkenhead, Wallasey and Liverpool, its origins probably lay in subsistence and tenant farming and fishing. The structures that remain from this period - principally those along Magazine Brow, are low stone structures that reflect the simple lives of their inhabitants.

This changed with the arrival of the powder magazines and the advent of middle class housing developments along the seafront. The fishing and farming industries are likely to have waned as the function of the settlement changed to a more urban mode of existence. This change of function was accompanied by changes in the architecture and materials of new buildings - with a change to more stylish designs that reflected contemporary provincial urban tastes - the use of both classical motifs (e.g. Marine Terrace) and later the introduction of Gothic devices.

The Magazines largely remains a dormitory settlement - there are still few signs of life during the middle of the day - save some activity in and around the bowling green, Vale Park, The Promenade and the Magazines Hotel / Pilot Boat public houses. The laying out of Vale Park reflects the ongoing concerns of the municipality to provide green spaces in order to help provide local citizens with opportunities to enjoy fresh air and greenery - the promotion of "rational recreation". Outdoor recreation in the local area was enhanced through the creation of Magazine Promenade, and its later re-engineering as a pedestrian and cycling thoroughfare. The custom of walking up and down the prom, popularised in Victorian times, endures to this day.

10.0 Local Details

At first sight, the Magazines appears to be a fairly typical North West seaside town, presenting a mixture of traditional cottages in its core and later more polite developments linking it to the expanding Merseyside conurbation. However, the village does possess a couple of nooks and corners showing interesting features that help to retain its distinctive character. Several properties may have interesting internal and garden features, but this survey was restricted to an external examination from public areas and further work will be needed to record interiors worthy of documenting.

The Roundhouse with its conical form and fish-tiled roof has already been mentioned. However, nearby is the cottage of 21 Magazine Brow which, although it has sadly acquired upvc windows, possesses still a set of mounting steps set into the sandstone boundary wall. The boundary wall is itself of some interest, because of its large tooled ashlar blocks and highly individual stone coping. Its neighbour, no. 19 has retained an impressive set of leaded-light windows.



Mounting steps, 21 Magazine Brow



Leaded lights, 19 Magazine Brow

Plate 22 - Local details I

Not far away, adjacent to the Magazine Hotel sits a cast iron milepost, showing the distance to the ferry at Seacombe - further research would be needed in order to date it or associate it with other similar mileposts in the region. There are smatterings of other traditional cast iron artefacts and historic metalwork within the appraisal area - for example lamp posts, and the cast iron posts of the railings on the promenade.

The appraisal area retains a fair quantity of traditional boundary walls - some in stone and others in brick and terracotta. Low red sandstone walls and copings are a characteristic feature of the Wirral, often under threat due to neglect and poor maintenance with strong cement mortars which lead decay which can bring about collapse. One feature for which Merseyside is justly famous is its array of individually styled gateposts, many in sandstone, that are an increasingly rare feature as one (or sometimes both) posts are sacrificed in order to create wider openings for SUVs and the like.



Cast-iron milepost outside Magazine Hotel



Traditional sandstone gatepost
Plate 23 - Local details II

Some corners of the settlement reveal traditional paving materials like cobbles that enrich the streetscape with their distinctive texture. Tarmac has eroded away on some sections of road to reveal the cobbles underneath. Sandstone kerbs survive in several areas and require protection if they are to avoid removal by contractors unaware of the conservation standards we are all required to uphold.



Granite cobbles, sandstone kerbs



Cobbles beneath the tarmac, Holland Road



Fine sandstone wall & coping, Magazine Brow



Terracotta coping, Vaughan Road
Plate 24 - local details III

The quantity of traditional joinery in the area - hardwood doors and sash windows etc is diminishing under the depredations of the upvc door & window industry, as are surviving examples of slate roofs and pressed brick boundary walls. However, a diminishing selection of traditional details does still remain in some parts of the settlement.



Timber oriel & clay tiles, Vaughan Road



Traditional door, Vaughan Road



Defunct fountain, Vale Park



Traditional lamppost



Cast iron post
Plate 25 - Local details IV



Traditional cast-iron street signs, Mariners Road.



Plate 26 - Local details V

11.0 The state of preservation and capacity for enhancement

The extent of Intrusion or damage

As discussed above, parts of the settlement have suffered extensively in terms of adverse alteration, mostly in the post-war period. Fort Street and Nelson Street had to be discounted from the appraisal area, even though they are connected to the development of the settlement, since so many houses have acquired additions and treatments that detract from their special character. Conversely, we have been able to include no. 1 Orrell Road because it is so well conserved - retaining much of its exterior joinery, barge boards & finials and chimneys.



Plate 27 - No. 1 Orrell Road - overall, a property whose exterior is well conserved.

The Magazines has largely escaped the damage suffered in other areas, where front gardens have been sacrificed in order to provide car parking to the extreme detriment to the street-scene, biodiversity and ambience of the area. The general condition of the area is good, the main problem being the loss of traditional features through ignorance and false economies - for example the partial loss of timber windows at New Brighton Primary School.

The area does not in general suffer from intensive development pressure. There are few instances of buildings of note being demolished in order to provide for the construction of apartment blocks, as has occurred elsewhere. Whilst a small minority of properties are clearly vacant and neglected, there are no highly significant properties that could be described as being "at risk". The area is not subject to large volumes of heavy traffic or extreme or endemic vandalism. The local economy is improving slightly as New Brighton recovers from decades of decline and low levels of investment. Property values in the area have soared in recent years due to increased inward investment into the nearby Liverpool, and the national cult of personal property and equity management. Because of its characterful quality and diversity of house types the Magazines has proved popular with people wishing to move into this part of the Wirral.

Capacity for change

Clearly, conservation areas do not conserve themselves and management regimes are necessary in order to safeguard their character in the long term. The majority of local authorities in Britain have thus far not had the resources to draw up management plans for conservation areas. The areas in which urban conservation is successfully realised are generally either those where the whole township is incorporated into a managing trust which is able to police changes through covenants etc, or those areas which contain a high proportion of listed buildings. The Magazines, like the vast majority of areas of conservation value, has neither of these attributes, and therefore a different approach is called for.

Frequent mention is made of the potential of an Article 4 Directive to maintain standards in conservation areas by restricting permitted development rights. This facility enables the local authority to draw up a schedule of features, e.g. traditional windows, doors, roofing materials and boundary walls which together sustain the character of a locality. Their retention and conservation can then be policed by the local authority. The use of these directives has, however, met with little success since few local authorities possess the resources to police minor changes in joinery units and materials. Such directives are also generally directed at those groups of buildings and terraces that show a high degree of both uniformity and preservation in their details - windows, doors, ironwork etc.

The Magazines possesses few sets of homogenous terrace properties that display a high proportion of well-preserved period details. The exception to this is Oakland Vale, which is substantially intact, but even here upvc units have encroached. I would therefore contend that there is little justification for imposing an Article 4 directive here.

Conversely, there would appear to be great potential for area-based improvement schemes of a sort that focused on the conservation and re-instatement of period details, the removal and remediation of unsympathetic alterations and enhancement of the public realm. Such projects could include the repair and improvement of features visible from public areas - boundary walls, ironwork, exterior joinery etc. and reinstatement of traditional street paving and furniture.

Also of relevance to the public realm is the need to ensure that standards are adhered to in terms of alterations to the streetscape. Several conservation areas have suffered damage through over-zealous highway schemes that have destroyed traditional paving schemes and replaced them with standard paving engineering based on tarmac, concrete kerbs and anomalous paving regimes. We now have guidance, contained in the government publication "Streets for All - North West" to the effect that historic paving should be preserved and repaired using traditional methods.

This publication also suggests constructive approaches for the enhancement and improvement of the street environment. Statutory undertakers have in the past been guilty of failing to make good their excavations, using tarmac patching instead of compatible materials, to the detriment of the public realm. Legislation now exists to enforce against crude, unsympathetic street repairs and local agencies should be supported in their efforts to protect streets from negligent contractors.

With regard to the potential for further buildings to be listed, it is unlikely that any of the buildings in the area are of sufficient significance to qualify for statutory listing. Possible exceptions are: The Roundhouse, 17-19 Magazine Brow, the War Memorial on Magazines Promenade and the milepost outside the Magazines Hotel. Other buildings that could qualify for local listing (if a local list is instigated on the Wirral) are all of the above (if statutory listing was not forthcoming), the Magazines Hotel itself and the lodge at Vale Park.

Long-term management

Re-instatement of features through area schemes, and conservation of the public realm are just two aspects of a series of management tools that could be employed to aid preservation and enhancement of the conservation area in the longer term. This appraisal is intended ultimately to inform a Conservation Area Management Plan which will consider a wide range of measures appropriate for achieving urban conservation in the designated area. Other instruments may include enforcement against unauthorised works, or linkages to regeneration and enhancement programmes.

There has been much talk of "home zones" and the creation of people-friendly environments in suburban areas, and this has linkages to traffic signage and road markings/designations. Any such projects should take account of historic surfaces and opportunities for reinstatement of traditional paving regimes - cobbles etc.

Summary

The Magazines is an area of New Brighton that has a rich urban history, made apparent through its historic street pattern, structures from a variety of periods and high quality recreative spaces. Its links to the sea were formerly the basis of its existence, through fishing and gunpowder storage, whereas use of the promenade is now entirely associated with leisure and the benefits of living close to a estuary and a waterfront of international significance. The quality of the environment, apparent in its complement of historic buildings and green spaces, makes it a popular place to settle in. Although not subject to high development pressure, the character of the settlement could benefit from a variety of conservation measures - the most important of which is long-term urban management.

Useful Information, Contact Details

As a local authority Wirral Council is charged with developing policies aimed at conserving and enhancing the character of conservation areas, and of ensuring the statutory protection of listed buildings. The conservation team is located within the Development Control section of the Wirral Council's Technical Services Department. The address is as follows:

Built Conservation,
Technical Services Department,
Wirral MBC - Cheshire Lines Building,
Canning Street,
Birkenhead,
CH41 1ND,
builtconservation@wirral.gov.uk
tel. (0151) 606 2157

Wirral Council's approach to conservation is informed by the provisions of the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990*, and the guidance associated with it in *Planning Policy Guidance Note 15*. Whilst Wirral Council is working to its Unitary Development Plan, this document is ultimately to be replaced by the its own Local Development Framework, supported by policy statements and local agreements.

A further layer of planning legislation is the regional policy guidance contained within the *Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West*, and promulgated by the North West Regional Assembly. This document contains policies on design, development and environmental conservation, and guidance on the implementation of its design policies is contained within the assembly publication, "North West Best Practice Design Guide". Importantly, these documents currently take precedence over local policy statements.

Conservation has extensive linkages with other policy areas - too many to mention here but principally: planning, regeneration, leisure and cultural heritage, environmental conservation, highway maintenance, archaeology and tourism. These linkages should be strengthened by working methods that take account of the larger policy dimension to each project and draw on a wide range of built environment expertise and best practice.

The government's premier heritage conservation institution is English Heritage - which consults on large scale development affecting conservation areas and grade I and II* listed buildings, as well as significant archaeological remains. Its address is:

English Heritage - North West Region
Canada House
3 Chepstow Street
Manchester
M1 5FW
Tel: 0161 242 1400
www.english-heritage.org.uk

Other regional built environment institutions that may consult on development in the area are:

The Merseyside Archaeological Service. -
<http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/mol/archaeology/mas/>

The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment
www.cabe.org.uk

The Civic Trust - www.civictrust.org.uk/

A variety of amenity societies are active in the region, the most significant being:

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings
www.spab.org.uk

The Wirral Society
www.wirralsociety.net/

The premier national organisation for the recognition of local distinctiveness and its conservation is Common Ground, their website being:
[http://www.commonground.org.uk/](http://www.commonground.org.uk)

The premier national organisation for urban design is The Urban Group at:
www.udg.org.uk

Amenity societies for particular building traditions:

The Georgian Group www.georgiangroup.org.uk
The Victorian Society www.victorian-society.org.uk/

Further reading

There are several books available on the history of Wirral and New Brighton, various titles being available from local bookshops. English Heritage produces a number of publications on urban conservation, the most relevant being:

Power of Place: The Future of the Historic Environment (2000)
Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas (2006)
Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals (2006)
Building in Context (2001)
Informed Conservation (2001)
Streets for All - North West (2005)

Other useful publications are:

The Building Conservation Directory (www.buildingconservation.com)
The Georgian Group Book of the Georgian House
Collins Period House

The government has sought to connect all aspects of government-sanctioned local conservation into a single portal called HELM - Historic Environment Local Management, available via: www.helm.org.uk

13.0 Maps of the Magazines



Map 1 – Bennison’s map of 1835



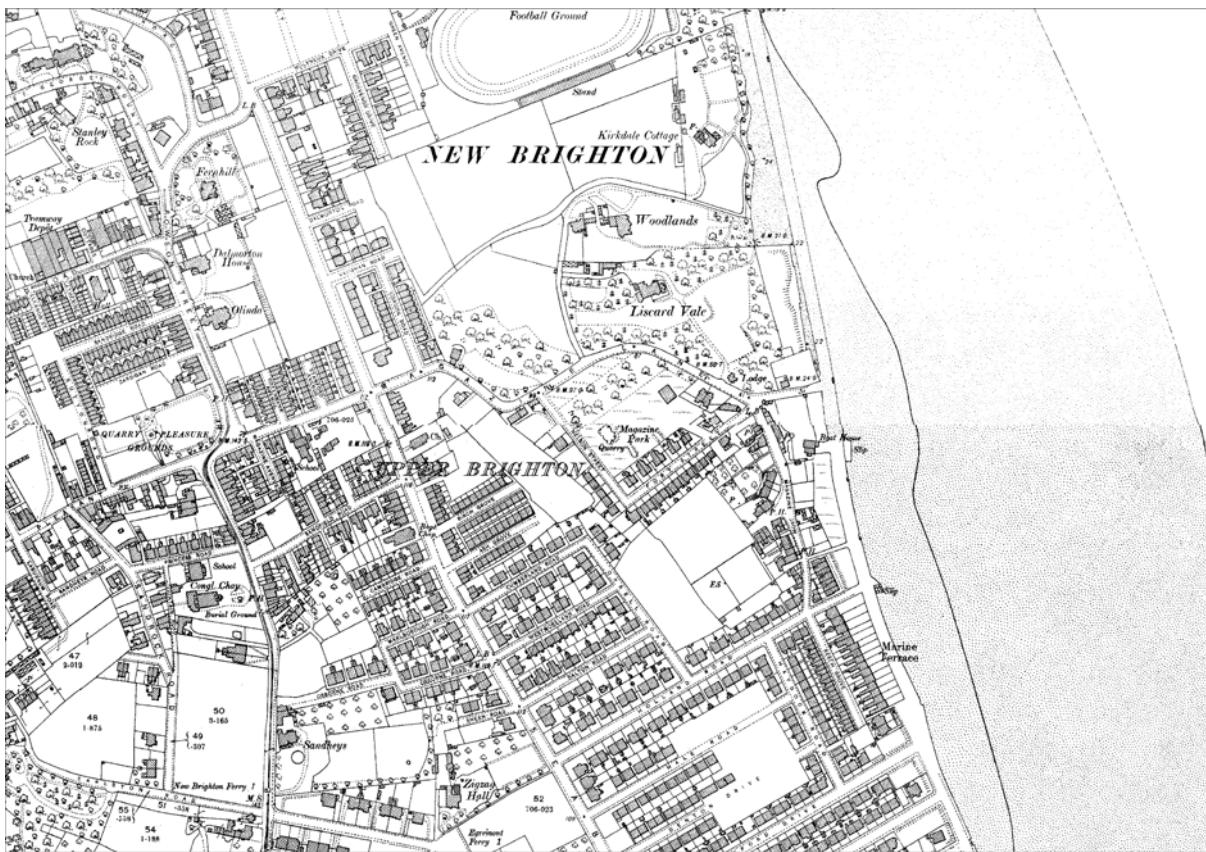
Map 2 - (detail)



Map 3 - Tithe Map of 1841



Map 4 – 1st Edition Ordnance Survey of 1870s

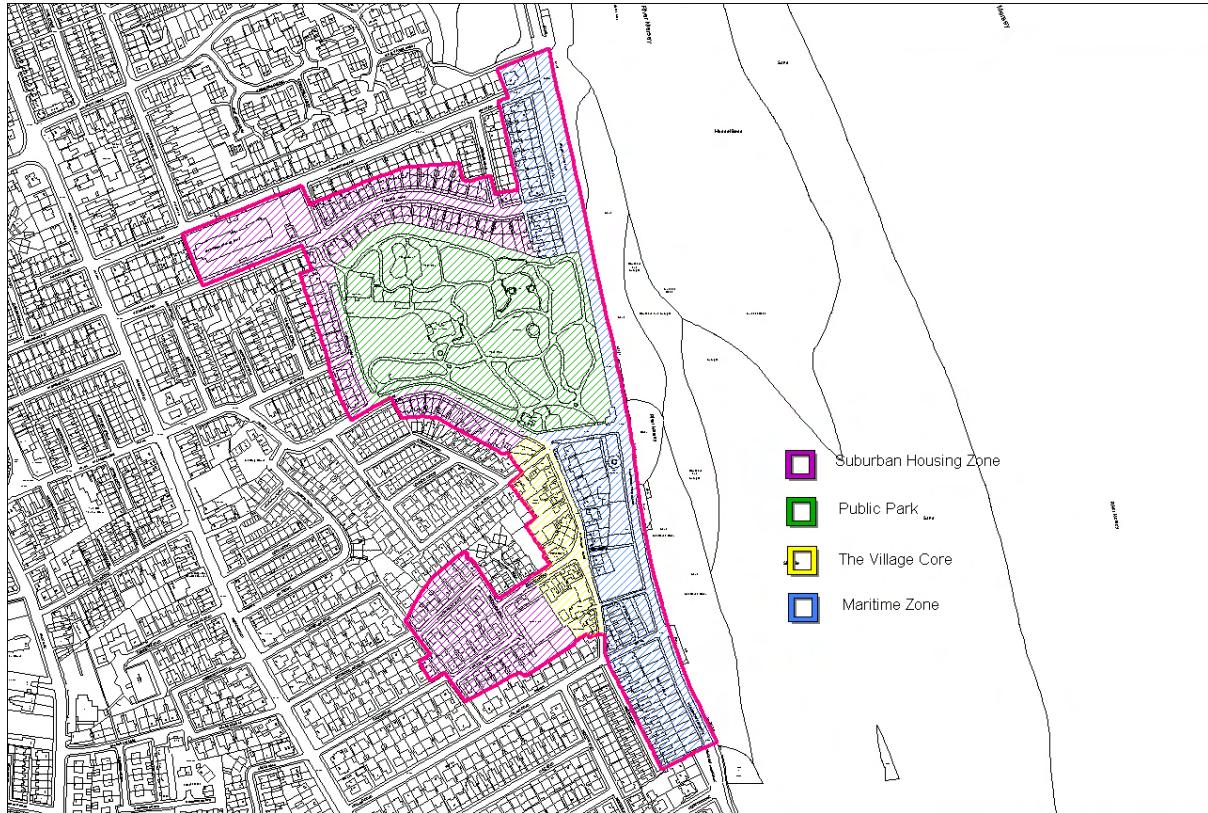


Map 5 – 2nd Edition OS Map of 1890s



Map 6 – 3rd Ed OS Map of approx. 1920

Map 7 - Character Zones



Map 8 - Structures of Archaeological Importance

