

Birkendale

CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

March 2008



A P P R A I S A L

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After a period of public consultation, Sheffield City Council adopted this conservation area appraisal and the accompanying management proposals for Birkendale on 3rd March 2008, which means they are now a material consideration in the determination of planning applications in the area.

BIRKENDALE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

1.0 Introduction

Purpose of the appraisal

1.1 This appraisal seeks to record and analyse the various features that give the Birkendale Conservation Area its special architectural and historic interest. The area's buildings and spaces are noted and described, and marked on the Townscape Appraisal map along with listed buildings, buildings of townscape merit, significant trees and spaces, and important views into and out of the conservation area. There is a presumption that all of these features should be "preserved or enhanced", as required by the legislation.

1.2 This appraisal builds upon national policy, as set out in PPG15, and local policy (see below). It provides a firm basis on which applications for development within the Birkendale Conservation Area can be assessed.

1.3 To be concise and readable, the appraisal does not record all features. The omission of any feature from the text or accompanying maps does not, therefore, mean that it is not of interest or value.

Summary of special interest

1.4 The Birkendale Conservation Area, designated in December 1988, is a well-defined residential suburb lying just to the north west of Sheffield's historic city centre. Dating from the 1850s, Birkendale is an early example of the Freehold Land Society developments that played a major role in the growth of Sheffield's suburbs in the mid to late 19th century. Immediately to the west of the conservation area is the St Joseph's Convent Area of Special Environmental and Historic Interest.

1.5 The special interest that justifies designation of the Birkendale Conservation Area derives from the following features:

- Its historical importance as an early example of the Freehold Land Society

developments that played a major role in the growth of Sheffield's suburbs in the mid to late 19th century;

- Its detached or semi-detached stone-built houses of above average size, well set in their large plots, some with carriage houses and stables;
- Its large gardens and mature trees, which lend a park-like atmosphere to this part of the city, and which supports a surprising variety of wildlife;
- Its coherence as a small private estate, and its atmosphere of tranquility, privacy and enclosure;
- Its boundary walls, ironwork and entrance gates, which contribute to the visual coherence of the estate;
- The survival of historic street surfaces (in Birkendale Road) and of gas standards (now converted to electricity).



Mature trees lend a park-like atmosphere to this part of Sheffield.

2.0 The planning policy context

2.1 Conservation areas are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. A conservation area is defined as “an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”. It is the quality and interest of an area, rather than that of individual buildings, which is the prime consideration in identifying a conservation area.

2.2 Section 71 of the same Act requires local planning authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area that are designated as conservation areas. Section 72 specifies that, in making a decision on an application for development in a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

2.3 This document should be read in conjunction with national planning policy statements and guidance, particularly Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (PPG 15) – Planning and the Historic Environment. The layout and content follows guidance produced by English Heritage, the Heritage Lottery Fund and the English Historic Towns Forum.

Local planning policy

2.4 This appraisal provides a firm basis on which applications for development within Sheffield City can be assessed. It should be read in conjunction with the wider development plan policy framework produced by Sheffield City Council. That framework is set out in a number of documents, notably:

2.5 The *Unitary Development Plan (UDP)* which is the statutory development plan for Sheffield, adopted in March 1998.

2.6 The *Sheffield Development Framework (SDF)* will be the City's portfolio of local development documents, collectively delivering the spatial planning strategy for the whole of the Sheffield District except for the area in the Peak Park. Once adopted, the SDF will replace the Unitary Development Plan (UDP).

2.7 The *Sheffield Urban Design Compendium*, a design guide for the whole of the City Centre providing guidance on how the on-going regeneration of the City Centre can be design led and sets a standard for architectural design and the quality of the public realm.

3.0 Location and setting

Location and context

3.1 The Birkendale Conservation Area is located about 1 km outside Sheffield's inner ring road, in the north western suburbs of the city. In the valley below the conservation area is the River Don, with its industrial complexes. Steep hills enclose the River Don on both sides of the Don Valley: Birkendale sits on the western side of the valley, which rises from the River via a series of terraces to Howard Hill, the highest point in the area. St Joseph's Convent sits on the crown of this hill, while the Birkendale estate lies just below, in the sheltered lee of the hill, on what must always have been a desirable location, upwind of Sheffield's smoke and factory smells, sheltered from northerly winds and facing south east, with fine views over the city centre. Birkendale itself is laid out at right angles to the contours of the valley, to take advantage of the views, so that the streets rise steeply from north east to south west.



Ordnance Survey map showing location of Birkendale Conservation Area in Sheffield

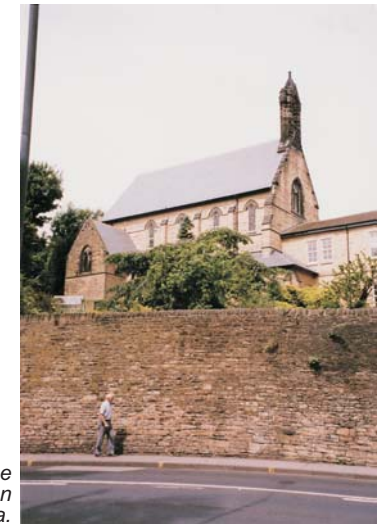
3.2 Although it forms part of the densely built-up Victorian suburbs of north-west Sheffield, the conservation area has the appearance and atmosphere of a garden suburb because of its generous plot sizes and large-scale houses and gardens, and because of its enclosed character. Traffic largely passes the area by. Birkendale View, Birkendale Road and Birkendale are all cul-de-sacs, with only one point of vehicular access, from Upperthorpe, up Birkendale Road.



Generous plot sizes and large-scale houses and gardens give the conservation area the appearance and atmosphere of a garden suburb.

3.3 The main through traffic route is Howard Road, which forms the western boundary of the conservation area and takes traffic from the city centre to the residential suburbs of Crookesmoor and Walkley. Even this road does not impinge on the conservation area, thanks to the high walls of mortared gritstone that separate the road from the conservation area, lining both sides of Howard Road from its junction with Upperthorpe to its junction with Fulton Road.

3.4 Immediately to the west of the conservation area is an Area of Special Environmental and Historic Interest centred around the former St Joseph's Convent. The convent occupies the crown of Howard Hill and the trees that grow along the crest of the hill along Howard Road are an important part of the setting for the conservation area, providing a green backdrop to views of Birkendale and shelter the estate from wind.



The former St Joseph's Convent, along with the trees that grow along the crest of Howard Hill, are an important part of the setting for the conservation area.

Boundaries

3.5 The boundary of the Birkendale Conservation Area has been drawn in such a way as to take in all of the building plots that formed part of the original Freehold Land Society development.

3.6 To the north and south, the boundary follows property boundaries dividing the original development from later houses built along Springvale Road (late 19th and early 20th century villas and semi-detached houses) and Fulton Road (largely new developments). The houses and gardens of these two streets surround the conservation area and help to reinforce the sense of enclosure that contributes to Birkendale's special character.

3.7 To the east, the boundary excludes modern development on the corner of Upperthorpe and Birkendale Road but includes a terraced row of 11 dwellings built between 1890 and 1903. The boundary then follows property boundaries dividing the original Freehold Land Society development from the late 19th-century houses of Blake Street, including The Blake public house on the corner

of Blake Street and Daniel Hill Street, and a triangular-shaped area of land immediately to the west of The Blake. West of this patch of land, the boundary follows a footpath that leads from Daniel Hill Street into Birkendale Road.

3.8 To the west, the boundary follows the high wall that runs along the curving eastern side of Howard Road. It takes in the grade II listed St Joseph's School, but excludes a triangular patch of land with a bus shelter (site of the Howard Hotel public house on the 1890 Ordnance Survey map). It then takes in the wrought iron gates marking the start of a footpath that leads south into the conservation area.

3.9 Though St Joseph's School lies within the conservation area, the grade II listed Convent and Roman Catholic Chapel that belong with the school lie on the opposite side of Howard Road, in an Area of Special Environmental and Historic Interest whose boundary is clearly defined by the high gritstone wall that encloses the whole of this former convent and its grounds.

4.0 Historic development and archaeology

Archaeological significance

4.1 Although the Sites and Monuments Record and the South Yorkshire Archaeology Service's Historic Environment Characterisation Study cannot be regarded as definitive or comprehensive, data from both sources suggest both Neolithic and Roman activity in the area.

4.2 The whole of the conservation area therefore has archaeological potential above and below the ground, and it is likely that further consideration will need to be given to the effect of applications for substantial new development.

Origins and historic development

4.3 Place-names and early history

4.3.1 Birkendale (meaning 'birch valley') does not seem to have any antiquity as a name and does not appear on the First Edition of the Ordnance Survey

map (surveyed 1849 to 1850, engraved and published in 1853), where the area is known as Uppertorpe (originally Hubaldesthorp, or Hunbald's *thorp*, Old English – derived from the Scandinavian for secondary settlement or farm). Earlier maps of north western Sheffield show this as an area of enclosed fields with two sandstone quarries. One of these quarries is still discernible in the steep banks of the garden of No 160 Uppertorpe, in whose garden there are some very large blocks of stone lying where they were quarried; it is possible that this quarry supplied the stone for the construction of the estate. Late-18th-century maps of Sheffield show three prominent buildings on this side of Sheffield: the Hallam Workhouse (now gone), the Infirmary (built 1797, now converted to offices) and the Barracks (now converted to shops and offices). Uppertorpe is shown as a small village built around a crossroads, which survives some two blocks south east of the conservation area.

4.4 Freehold Land Societies

4.4.1 Birkendale is an example of a Freehold Land Society development, and the role of Freehold Land Society's in the development of Sheffield's suburbs is only just beginning to be appreciated by historians. They date from a time of major growth for the city, in the period 1850 to 1880, when the introduction of horse-drawn buses (1850s) and later electric trams (1870s) made possible the opening up of the western suburbs. The result was that the built up area on this side of Sheffield quadrupled in the period 1850 to 1880.

4.4.2 Whereas a typical developer might well aim to build as cheaply and as densely as possible to maximise the return on a land investment, some Freehold Land Societies took a different approach. Some (like the Walkley Land and Building Society and the Sheffield Reform Freehold Society) were philanthropic, and were set up specifically to provide decent housing for working-class households. Others (like the Birkendale Land Society) were middle-class societies, developing exclusive suburbs to meet the aspirations of those who could afford to escape the city. They laid out their estates with relatively large plots and enforced rules that ensured a high standard of house and garden design; in effect these were planned estates that contained many of the elements that were adopted in the early decades of the 20th century by the garden city approach to suburban development.

4.4.3 Freehold Land Societies developed as a response to the reluctance of landowners to sell small parcels of land. By forming a Freehold Land Society, trustees were able to negotiate with land agents to buy a large piece of land and to take out a mortgage sufficient to cover the purchase price and the cost of laying out roads, drains and boundary walls. Plots were then allotted to members (some were also auctioned) who paid for their 'allotments', as they were known, in installments. These periodic payments were sufficient in aggregate to enable the Society to pay back the mortgage capital and interest until, after a period of time, the original mortgage was discharged and the allotment owners became freeholders in their own property.

4.4.4 The benefit to Society members was that they did not have to find a lump sum to fund their land purchase and could instead invest that money in building their house. Societies usually imposed strict controls on development, and many of these rules seem to have applied to the Birkendale development – for example, a prohibition on subdividing the often generously sized plots and on building more than one dwelling per allotment, the requirement to build a house of at least £120 in value, with at least two storeys and stone elevations, and no nearer the road than 21 feet. Ground plans and elevation drawings had to be submitted for scrutiny by the Trustees in advance of building, and covenants were enforced to ensure that the area remained purely residential, prohibiting the use of any building as business premises or workshops, or for 'offensive' purposes, such as public houses or places of public entertainment and resort.

4.5 The development of Birkendale

4.5.1 The Birkendale Freehold Land Society must have been formed in the late 1840s, because the first edition of the Ordnance Survey map (surveyed 1849 to 1850) shows most of the land within the conservation area already subdivided, with streets, paths and property boundaries already laid out. Building work seems to have begun at the eastern end, because this is where all seven of the earliest surviving houses are located (Nos 1, 66, 72 and 74 Birkendale Road, and Nos 16 and 18 Birkendale View), all of which are shown on the 1855 Ordnance Survey map.



Extract from O.S. map of 1855, showing the early development of Birkendale.

4.5.2 The next available map of the area is the 1863 map surveyed for J Brigley and published by W White, which describes itself as 'a new plan of Sheffield reduced from the large Ordnance Survey' and comprising 'all the subsequent improvements, new streets, etc from 1850 to 1863'. By now, a further 23 of the surviving dwellings can be recognised, comprising most of the original estate.

4.5.3 Both maps (1850 and 1863) show a boundary forming the western edge of the estate at that time which is still traceable in the alignment of footpaths and property boundaries. The large triangular plot of land to the west of this boundary was developed next: the 1890 edition of the Ordnance Survey shows this previously undivided plot with 20 houses and St Joseph's School.

4.5.4 The 1890 map also shows Alpine Road for the first time, with the three substantial villas that lie within the southern boundary of the conservation area. One large house (Fountain Villa), located on the site of No 132 Upperthorpe, is shown on the 1853 map (and on the 1863) but the plan changes by the time of the 1890 map, suggesting that this house was replaced, or else survives as part of the larger property now on this site.

4.5.5 By the time of the 1905 Ordnance Survey map, 11 dwellings have been constructed along the eastern side of Birkendale Road on land that is shown as an orchard attached to Canton Place on earlier maps. Stylistically, the row looks as if it dates from the early 1890s rather than the early 20th century.

Canton Place appears on the 1903 map but recently built flats now occupy its site.



Extract from O.S. map of 1905, showing the extent of development in and around the Birkendale area since 1850.

4.5.6 A further 13 dwellings within the conservation area were built more recently – within the last two or three decades – as replacements for earlier buildings, as new buildings on undeveloped plots, or as new buildings on land subdivided from a large garden.

4.5.7 At the western end, a completely separate development saw the establishment of a convent and 'reformatory' for Catholic girls by the Sisters of Charity in 1861. This is described on the 1890 Ordnance Survey map as 'St Joseph's Home (Industrial School for Catholic Girls)' The convent was originally based in Howard House, a large early 19th-century stone house that already existed on the site (now the Sheffield Buddhist Centre, listed Grade II). St Joseph's Roman Catholic Chapel (listed Grade II) was added to the south west of Howard House in 1871 and a new school (listed Grade II) was added in 1889, on the opposite side of Howard Road (i.e. within the conservation area).

5.0 Spatial analysis

Key views and vistas

5.1 Although it is located on a hillside, Birkendale is virtually invisible from the outside. Looking up to Birkendale from lower down the hill, the most visible features of this part of Sheffield are the trees that sit on the crest of Howard Hill, on the eastern boundary of the former St Joseph's Convent.

5.2 Views play a very important role within the estate, and it is clear that the siting of the individual houses within their plots owes much to the desire of their owners to make the most of the south easterly aspect and views across the Don Valley and Sheffield's city centre to what were then green hills. One house (No 134 Upperthorpe), named as Oak Tower on the 1890 Ordnance Survey map, has a Gothic turret rising to the west of the house as a belvedere, or place for enjoying the views.

6.0 Definition of the special interest of the conservation area

Uses and activities

6.1 Historically Birkendale was a purely residential area, with covenants in place prohibiting the use of buildings for commercial purposes. The only property whose use has been recorded is No 104 Upperthorpe, a handsome and substantial house of c 1853 that is described on the 1890 Ordnance Survey map as the Vicarage to St Philips (the eastern side of the Birkendale estate falls just within St Philips parish; St Philips Church used to stand in the angle between Infirmary Road and Penistone Road, but has since been demolished and is only commemorated now in the name of St Philips Road).

6.2 Today the area continues to be primarily residential, but with several houses subdivided into flats and student accommodation. For example, one property is used as a bed and breakfast business, and another by a physiotherapist.



The Oak Tower, at No. 134 Upperthorpe, is a Gothic turret rising to the west of the house for enjoying the south easterly views.

Roads, lanes and paths

6.3 The Birkendale estate has a strong sense of enclosure and is difficult to find on a first visit because there are so few vehicular routes into the estate. Although Upperthorpe is a through route, it receives only light traffic. The three main streets in the estate (Birkendale, Birkendale Road and Birkendale View) consist of narrow cul-de-sacs, and are used exclusively by residents or visitors to properties in the estate. One of the streets (Birkendale) has a large and mature ash tree growing in the road which was substantial enough as a landmark to have been plotted on the 1890 Ordnance Survey map.

6.4 An original footpath, unadopted and maintained by the residents of Birkendale provides access from Howard Road. Attractive original wrought-iron gates give access to a single-track lane flanked by four-foot high stone walls topped by clipped privet hedges and overhung by mature deciduous trees, providing a delightfully rural pedestrian entrance to the estate.



Access to the estate from Howard Road is by means of this single-track lane flanked by stone walls and clipped privet hedges, and overhung by mature deciduous trees.



Building form, architectural and historic character

6.5 The majority of the plots at Birkendale are a third to a quarter of an acre in size with ambitious houses and gardens, as well as carriage houses and stables, indicating that many of the Society's members were very prosperous. The large scale 1890 Ordnance Survey map shows the gardens of these houses in considerable detail, and it is clear that when these houses were first built, they resembled miniature mansions set with miniature parks of some pretension, with fountains, formal beds, rock gardens and conservatories. Something of the flavour of these original gardens can best be seen today in the houses and well-tended gardens on the north side of Birkendale View.

6.6 Nevertheless, the design of the houses is surprisingly sober and conservative. Their uniformity suggests that the majority might have been built by one construction company, quite possibly based on a pattern-book design, with few individual features. Most are built from square cut sandstone laid in even courses, under shallow hipped roofs of Welsh slate. A few are built of red brick (e.g. No 24 Birkendale View). They are two storeys tall, with symmetrical facades: a central unadorned doorcase and rectangular overlight is flanked by bay windows with Welsh slate roofs; upper storeys have three large windows. Asymmetry is rare and restricted to a slight variation in plan (L-shaped, rather than rectangular). Windows have flat stone lintels or brick voussoirs, and are typically of two by two lights (or one by two in the case of central staircase windows on the upper floor).

6.7 Given that Gothic was fashionable when these houses were built, they are surprisingly rectilinear in design: pointed decoration is limited to the occasional gatepost (e.g. No 24 Birkendale View), or to a front door (e.g. No 22 Birkendale View), but is by no means applied systematically to the whole exterior.



Given that neo-Gothic was fashionable when these houses were built, they are surprisingly rectilinear in design: pointed decoration is limited to the occasional front door.

6.8 In summary, the houses offer little in the way of ornament either in the exterior detail or in the massing. Intriguingly, several houses have stained glass windows that hint of more decorative interiors. These are of art deco design, and two houses have sunburst designs of a similar design, raising the interesting possibility that a local manufacturer of stained glass was actively marketing products to the residents of the Birkendale estate in the 1920s or 1930s.

6.9 Most of the houses are detached, but there are some smaller plots with pairs of semi-detached houses, and even a terraced row (along Birkendale Road). A small number of carriage houses and stables have survived in back gardens (notably at Nos 48 to 52 Birkendale).

6.10 In general there is little sense of any building line: Birkendale's houses are set well back from their street boundaries and are sited for the best prospect and aspect, without regard for the street alignment or the siting of other houses. The exceptions are the terrace row on Birkendale Road and the more regularly sited houses along Alpine Road and its westwards extension on the southern side of Upperthorpe, where a series of smaller asymmetrical Italianate villas with rounded and hemispherical window arches, barge boards and pinnacles and small cast iron balconies introduces a new architectural theme to this part of the estate.

Boundary treatment

6.11 Front boundaries consist of low walls of squared coursed sandstone (typically five to seven courses) topped by flat or rounded coping stones. Property entrances are flanked by sandstone gate piers; most have lost their original piers and wrought-iron gates; those piers that survive are incomplete, and lack their gables. There is evidence that some walls were surmounted by ironwork: No 132 Upperthorpe Road is the only house to retain its original boundary walls and ironwork (though not its garden gate, which is more recent).

6.12 Rear property walls are of the same coursed sandstone but rise to head height. Some of those backing onto Birkendale View (Nos 48 to 54) incorporate

stables, carriage sheds and hay lofts into the rear wall. Similar lengths of head-high wall are found on both sides of the footpath between Nos 126 and 128 Upperthorpe, and along Birkendale Road. The latter also has a stretch of well-laid brick wall with very fine mortar joints forming the boundary wall of No 66. The front wall of the terrace row running up the eastern side of this street is a fine example of a low stepped wall of red brick, with sandstone coping stones that would have had railings (they survive in front of No 32).



Rear property walls of coursed sandstone backing onto Nos 48 to 54 Birkendale View incorporate stables, carriage sheds and hay lofts.

6.13 Mention should also be made of the exceptionally good mortared sandstone wall that surrounds St Joseph's Convent, which rises to 5 metres in height along Howard Road, and of the lower wall that runs along the opposite side of Howard Road, forming the western boundary of the conservation area. Together these two parallel walls, following the S-shaped double curve of Howard Road as it crosses the crest of Howard Hill, are a very attractive feature. On the western side, the walls are unbroken but for the entrance lodge to St Joseph's Convent; on the eastern side a garden gate (leading to 170 Upperthorpe Road) is topped by an unusual triangular pediment made of iron slag, while Saccomando's garage (a small workshop undertaking vehicle repairs) is built into the wall at the rear of No. 168 Upperthorpe – possibly dating from the 1950s, this utilitarian but not obtrusive building is painted in the national colours of the Italian owner/founder.



The rear garden wall of 170 Upperthorpe is topped by an unusual triangular pediment made of iron slag.



Saccomando's 1950s garage is patriotically painted in the national colours of the Italian owner.

6.14 Further north, the entrance to the former St Joseph's School is another attractive feature, with the Dutch gables of the former school building peeping above a handsome and curvaceous stone wall.

Listed buildings

6.15 The only listed building in the Birkendale Conservation Area is the former St Josephs' School, set on a terrace below Howard Road (so that the first floor level is at road level), an attractive E-plan building of 1889 by Goldie, Child & Goldie, in neo-Renaissance style of coursed squared stone with dressed stone quoins. The central porch has a broken pediment and a statue niche containing a sculpture of St Michael slaying Satan. It is flanked by two triangular pediments, with large mullioned and transomed windows, which in turn are flanked by side wings with large Dutch-style bell gables with ox-eye windows above large mullioned and transomed windows with drip moulds. This building was converted to an architect's office in 1990 and has been converted again to create nine apartments.



The gables of the former St Joseph's School peep over the school's high peripheral wall.



The school, built in Dutch Renaissance style in 1889, is the Conservation Area's only listed building.

6.16 On the opposite side of the road, outside the conservation area but within the adjacent Area of Special Environmental and Historic Interest, lies Howard House, a plain early 19th century house taken over by the Sisters of Charity in 1861 and used first as a boarding school for Catholic girls, then as a dwelling for the Sisters. Joined to the house is a former chapel (grade II) of 1871 by M E Hadfield & Son in Gothic Revival style, of squared coursed sandstone, with an apsidal nave forming a continuous line with the chancel, all covered by a very steeply pitched roof of Welsh slate, and with a tall belfry at the eastern end.

Buildings of Townscape Merit

6.17 In addition to the area's listed buildings, a number of unlisted buildings have been noted on the Townscape Appraisal map as being 'Buildings of Townscape Merit' which make a positive contribution to the special interest of the conservation area.

6.18 With listed buildings, Buildings of Townscape Merit help create the conservation area's distinctive and interesting historic townscape. As recommended in Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment, the general presumption should be in favour of retaining buildings which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area.

6.19 The following unlisted buildings within the conservation area are of particular interest:

- Alpine Road: Nos 1, 3 and 13 (typical late Victorian villas in original condition, that help to define the corners of Upperthorpe, Alpine Road and Springvale Road)
- Upperthorpe: Nos 217 (Italianate in original condition), 283 (stained glass windows), 150/152 (original condition), 140 (stained glass), 134 (Oak Tower: the most ornate building on the estate, with Dutch gable to the south and battlemented tower pierced by quatrefoil windows rising above the main house to the west), 132 (with cobbled drive

flanked by pillars with ball finials and leading to an original carriage house), 118 to 124 (a run of four good houses in original condition) , 132 (original condition and good boundary walls with original iron railings, 104 (with an unaltered brick front elevation).



Nos 118 to 124 Upperthorpe, a run of four good houses in original condition



Boundary walls with original iron railings at No. 132 Upperthorpe.

- Birkendale Road: Nos 26 to 46 (a terrace row built after 1890 and before 1903 valuable for its coherence; Nos 28, 32 (original railings), 38, 44 and 46 are relatively untouched and 44 seems to have survived in original condition), 42 (stained glass).
- Birkendale View: Nos 28 (gateposts) and 26 (original condition)
- Birkendale: No. 40 (original condition)
- Mention should also be made of the electricity substation on the corner of Howard Road and Upperthorpe, which is an unusually good example of 1950s design, with blank arcading that adds shadow, relief and interest to what could have been a dull blank wall.



The electricity substation on the corner of Howard Road and Upperthorpe is an unusually good example of 1950s design, with blank arcading that adds shadow, relief and interest to what could have been a dull blank wall.



Nos 26 to 46 Birkendale Road. Note also the cast iron gas standard.

Trees, gardens and open spaces

6.20 Birkendale's houses are heavily interspersed with large trees that lend an air of privacy to the estate as a whole and to individual houses which, being set back well into their gardens, are well screened and not always visible from the road. These include large deciduous trees (lime, beech, ash and sycamore) that probably date from the early days of the estate's development and are often found on property boundaries and more recently planted ornamental trees that are planted within individual gardens.

Features of local interest

6.21 The whole of Birkendale Road retains its original cobbled setts and sandstone curbstones and sandstone pavement flags. Otherwise, all surfaces are modern tarmac with concrete paving.

6.22 Gas standards survive along Birkendale Road (6 in total), on the footpath

between Nos 126 and 128 Uppertorpe (1), and along Uppertorpe (5). Made of cast iron, they are marked 'Woodwoods Ltd Sheffield'. Gas lamps are shown on the 1890 Ordnance Survey map but in different positions to these, suggesting that these date from the first decade of the twentieth century. They have all been converted to electricity.

7.0 Issues

7.1 This section contains a brief summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the Birkendale Conservation Area together with recommendation, if any, for changes to the current conservation area boundary. Strengths and weaknesses, together with other more specific 'positives' and 'negatives' that were identified during the appraisal process, form the basis of a separate document, known as the *Birkendale Conservation Area Management Proposals*.

7.2 The *Management Proposals* set objectives for addressing the issues arising from this appraisal and make recommendations for possible improvements and the avoidance of harmful change.

Strengths

- This is a coherent conservation area, with historic boundaries, and an estate that has played an important historical role in the development of Sheffield;
- It adds character and diversity to the city, being an enclave of Victorian gentrification surrounded by artisan housing;
- It has escaped gentrification in the 21st century and provides large family houses at affordable prices within close proximity to Sheffield city centre;
- It manages to combine permeability with enclosure, partly thanks to its footpaths, enabling through pedestrian traffic;

- Several houses are very well looked after and set in well-maintained gardens that retain something of the ambience of the original 1850s development;
- Cobbled Birkendale Road is an increasingly rare survival of a street surface that was common in Sheffield's suburbs up to the 1970s;

Weaknesses

- With such large housing plots, it is inevitable that some change has occurred in the last 150 years, with original plots being subdivided and new dwellings erected. Smaller plots are not of themselves a weakness: as early as 1890 some smaller plots existed, especially to the western end of the development. The threat to the conservation area comes rather from the poor design quality of infill houses, which are often out of character with the earlier dwellings and bear little similarity to the modesty and sobriety of the original houses.
 - The carriage sheds and stables along Birkendale View are particularly vulnerable to conversion and sale as separate properties; these buildings are also threatened by neglect and vandalism.
 - A related threat is the subdivision of houses to create flats, with the visual intrusion of fire escapes and multiple dustbins, and the general air of neglect that stems from ill-defined responsibility for gardens, boundary walls and common parts.
 - Boundary walls in general have been neglected; many show signs of collapse and poor-quality repair, with heavy handed pointing in thick lines of grey Portland cement (in place of more subtle pointing in lime mortar). Where entrance gates and railings have been lost, they have been replaced in new materials that are alien in style and colour; similarly, new garden fences have introduced a discordant note to the area's gardens.
 - While the fronts of properties are relatively well maintained, the rears
-

have not fared so well. Birkendale View, for example, has builders' skips, piles of rubbish and neglected dustbins. Along the same road, back boundaries have been demolished to create access for cars and caravans, with the conversion of the back gardens to hard standing or the construction of modern garages. In one case a large and intrusive gate has been installed to create an access route to the back garden, crossing a public open space.

- In some cases, extensions have been built that are scarcely recognisable as the same dwelling as the front elevation.
- Unfettered modernisation has led to some visual eyesores, including where late Victorian houses have disappeared under pebble dash and the original balance of the façade has been altered by the insertion of overlarge windows.
- The environs of St. Joseph's Chapel is unkempt and neglected, disfigured by rubbish, broken fencing, traffic cones, brambles, Lawson cypresses (planted in a failed attempt to screen the site) and scarred walls where a porch has been demolished.



The Blake Pub backs on to the conservation area and is currently boarded up.

Birkendale Conservation Area boundary review

No changes to the Birkendale Conservation Area boundary are proposed.

Bibliography

J M Stainton, *The Making of Sheffield 1865–1914*, 1924, Sheffield (especially the chapter on ‘Saving the Suburbs: How Land Societies Helped in a Great Work’)

J N Tarn, ‘Sheffield’ in *Middle Class Housing in Britain*, MA Simpson and T H Lloyd (eds), 1977, David & Charles

List of photographs

Photograph 1: Mature trees lend a park-like atmosphere to this part of Sheffield.

Photograph 2: Generous plot sizes and large-scale houses and gardens give the conservation area the appearance and atmosphere of a garden suburb.

Photograph 3: The former St Joseph’s Convent, along with the trees that grow along the crest of Howard Hill, are an important part of the setting for the conservation area.

Photograph 4: The Oak Tower, at No. 134 Uppertorpe, is a Gothic turret rising to the west of the house for enjoying the south easterly views.

Photograph 5 & 6: Access to the state from Howard Road is by means of this single-track lane flanked by stone walls and clipped privet hedges, and overhung by mature deciduous trees.

Photograph 7: Given that neo-Gothic was fashionable when these houses were built, they are surprisingly rectilinear in design: pointed decoration is limited to the occasional front door.

Photograph 8: Rear property walls of coursed sandstone backing onto Nos 48 to 54 Birkendale View incorporate stables, carriage sheds and hay lofts.

Photograph 9: The rear garden wall of 170 Uppertorpe is topped by an unusual triangular pediment made of iron slag.

Photograph 10: Saccomando’s 1950s garage is patriotically painted in the national colours of the Italian owner.

Photograph 11: The gables of the former St Joseph’s School peep over the school’s high peripheral wall.

Photograph 12: The school, built in Dutch Renaissance style in 1889, is the Conservation Area’s only listed building.

Photograph 13: The electricity substation on the corner of Howard Road and Uppertorpe is an unusually good example of 1950s design, with blank arcading that adds shadow, relief and interest to what could have been a dull blank wall.

Photograph 14: This and similar art deco sunburst designs suggests that stained glass was actively marketed to the residents of the Birkendale estate in the 1920s or 1930s.

Photograph 15: Nos 118 to 124 Uppertorpe, a run of four good houses in original condition

Photograph 16: Boundary walls with original iron railings at No. 132 Uppertorpe Road.

Photograph 17: Nos 26 to 46 Birkendale Road. Note also the cast iron gas standard.

Photograph 18: The Blake Pub backs on to the conservation area and is currently boarded up.

Useful Contacts and Addresses

For information on listed buildings and conservation areas:

Urban Design and Conservation Team
Sheffield City Council,
Howden House,
1 Union Street,
Sheffield S1 2SH.
Tel: 0114 273 5804

www.sheffield.gov.uk/in-your-area/planning-and-city-development/urban-design--conservation

For information on the status and interpretation of the statutory Development Plan and supplementary planning guidance:

Forward and Area Planning Team
Sheffield City Council,
Howden House,
1 Union Street,
Sheffield S1 2SH.
Tel: 0114 273 4157

For further information relating to listed buildings and conservation areas:

English Heritage
37 Tanner Row
York
YO1 6WP
Tel: 01904 601901

For an excellent range of technical advice leaflets:

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB),
37 Spital Square, LONDON E1 6DY Tel: 020 7377 1644

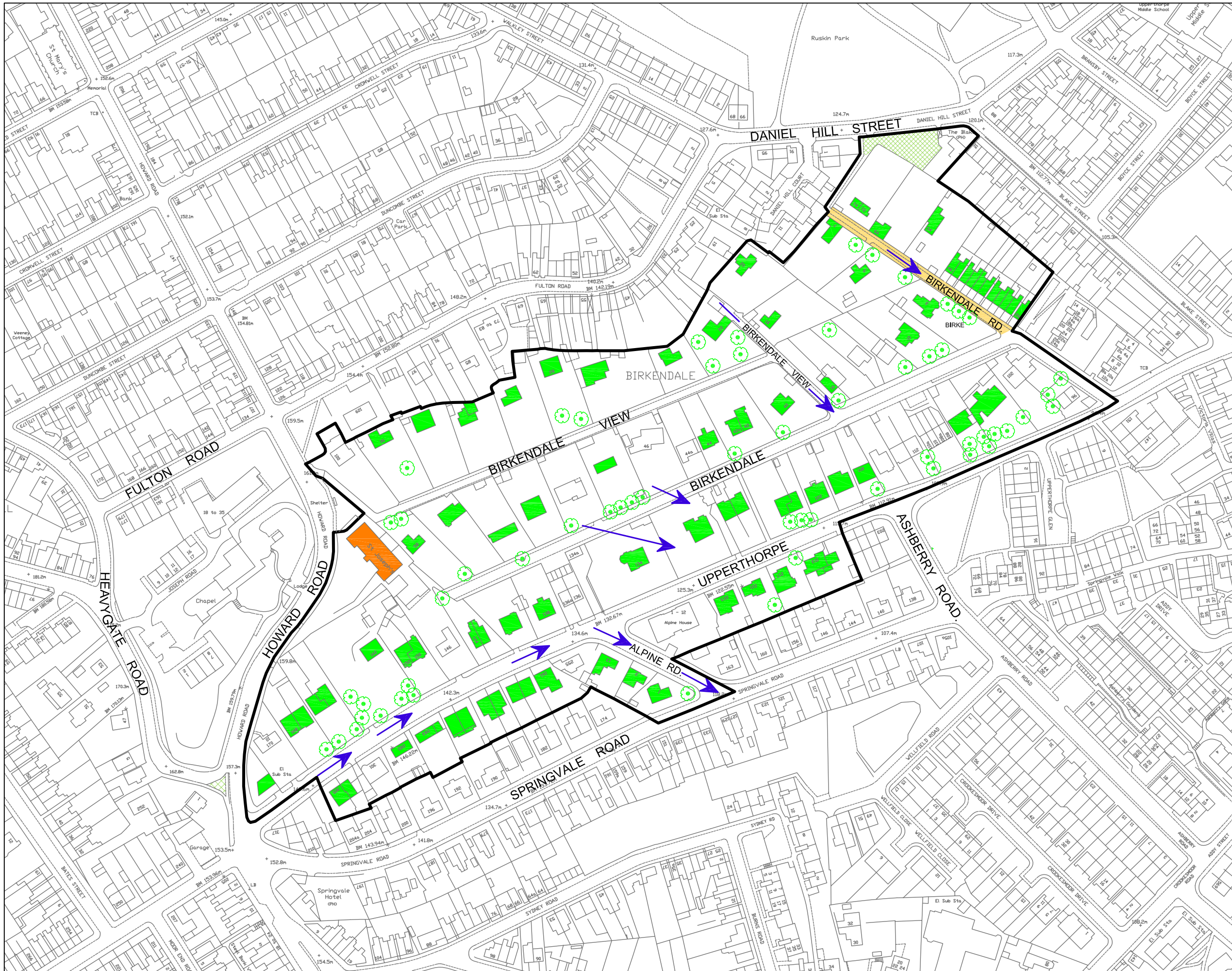
The Georgian Group,
6 Fitzroy Square, LONDON W1T 5DX Tel: 0207529 8920

The Victorian Society,
1 Priory Gardens, Bedford Park, LONDON W4 1TT Tel: 0208994 1019

The Twentieth Century Society,
70 Cowcross Street, LONDON EC1M 6EJ Tel: 020 7250 3857

Summary of Consultation undertaken

A consultation draft of this document was subject to a period of consultation between 19th November and 14th December 2007. All local residents in the conservation area were sent details of where they could view the document with a survey form asking for their comments. The public were also invited to a half-day meeting held at Upperthorpe Library during the consultation period, where they could discuss the Appraisal or Management Proposals with officers from the Council's Urban Design and Conservation Team. Local members and local community groups were also consulted as part of the process. 29 responses were received on the draft appraisal and after being revised in light of the comments received, it was adopted by Sheffield City Council on 3rd March 2008.



NOTES / REVISIONS:

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- Current Conservation Area boundary
- Listed Building
- Building of Townscape Merit
- Historic Street surface
- Prominent tree
- Important open space
- Significant view

SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL
DIRECTORATE OF DEVELOPMENT ENVIRONMENT & LEISURE
 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: JOHN MOTHERSOLE

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
 DIRECTOR
 D CURTIS BA, DIP.TP, MRTPI, FIHT

SCHEME:

TITLE: **BIRKENDALE CONSERVATION AREA**

COMMITTEE:

SCALE:

DR	TR	CAD	DATE:	MICRO:
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DRAWING NO:

CAD FILE NAME:

