



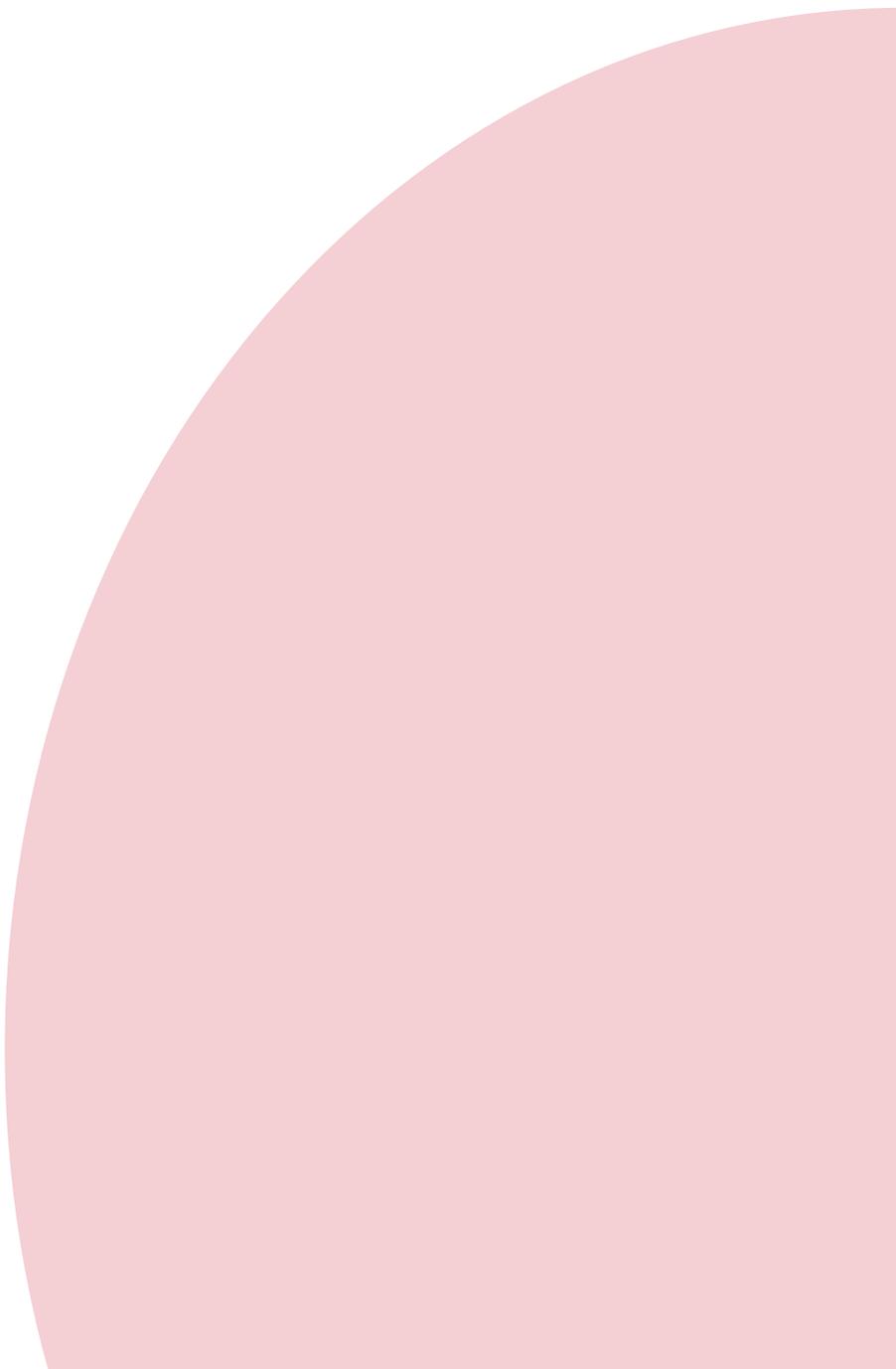
St. Helens  
Council



# High Street and Willow Park Conservation Area Appraisal

January 2009

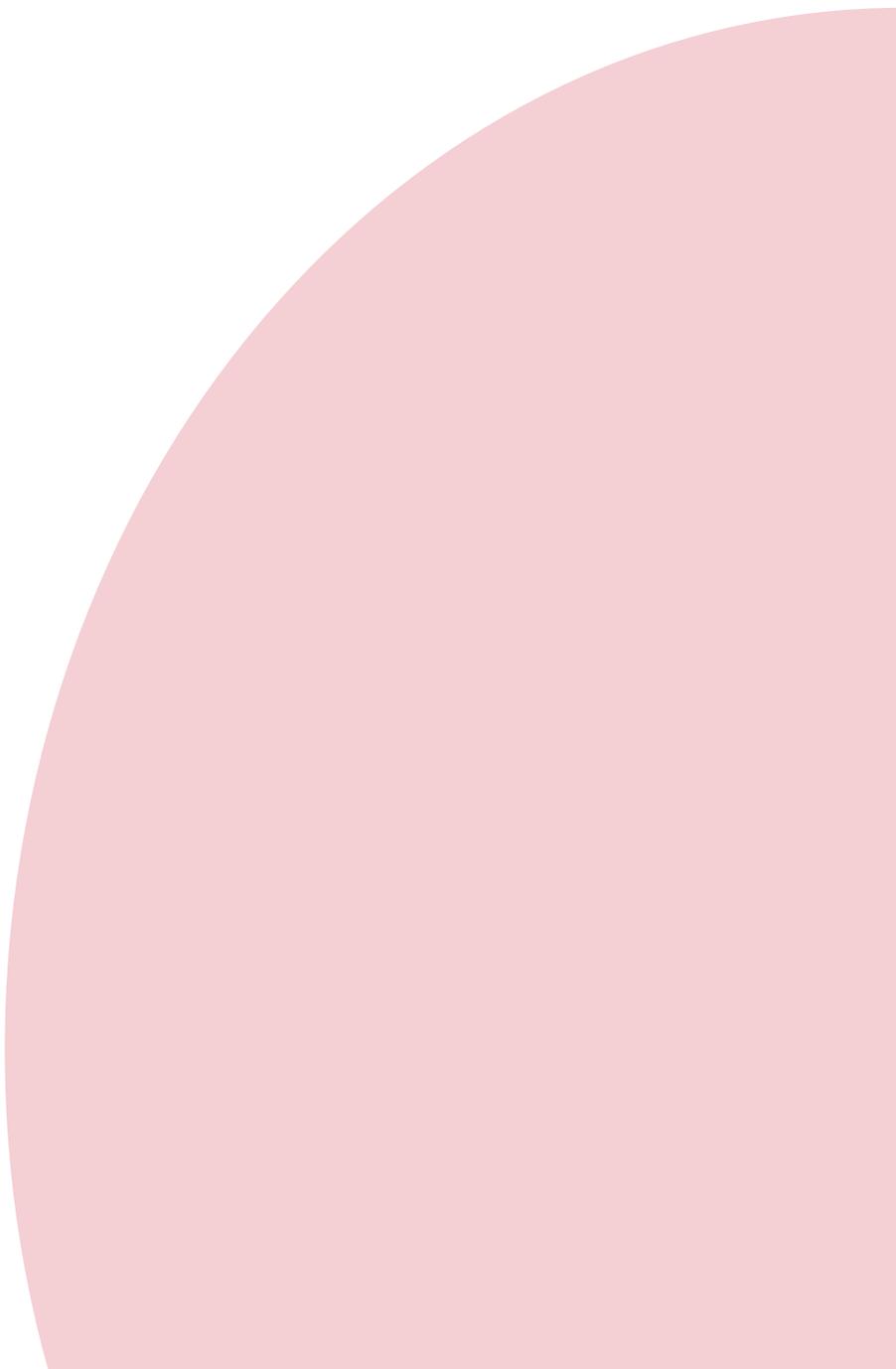






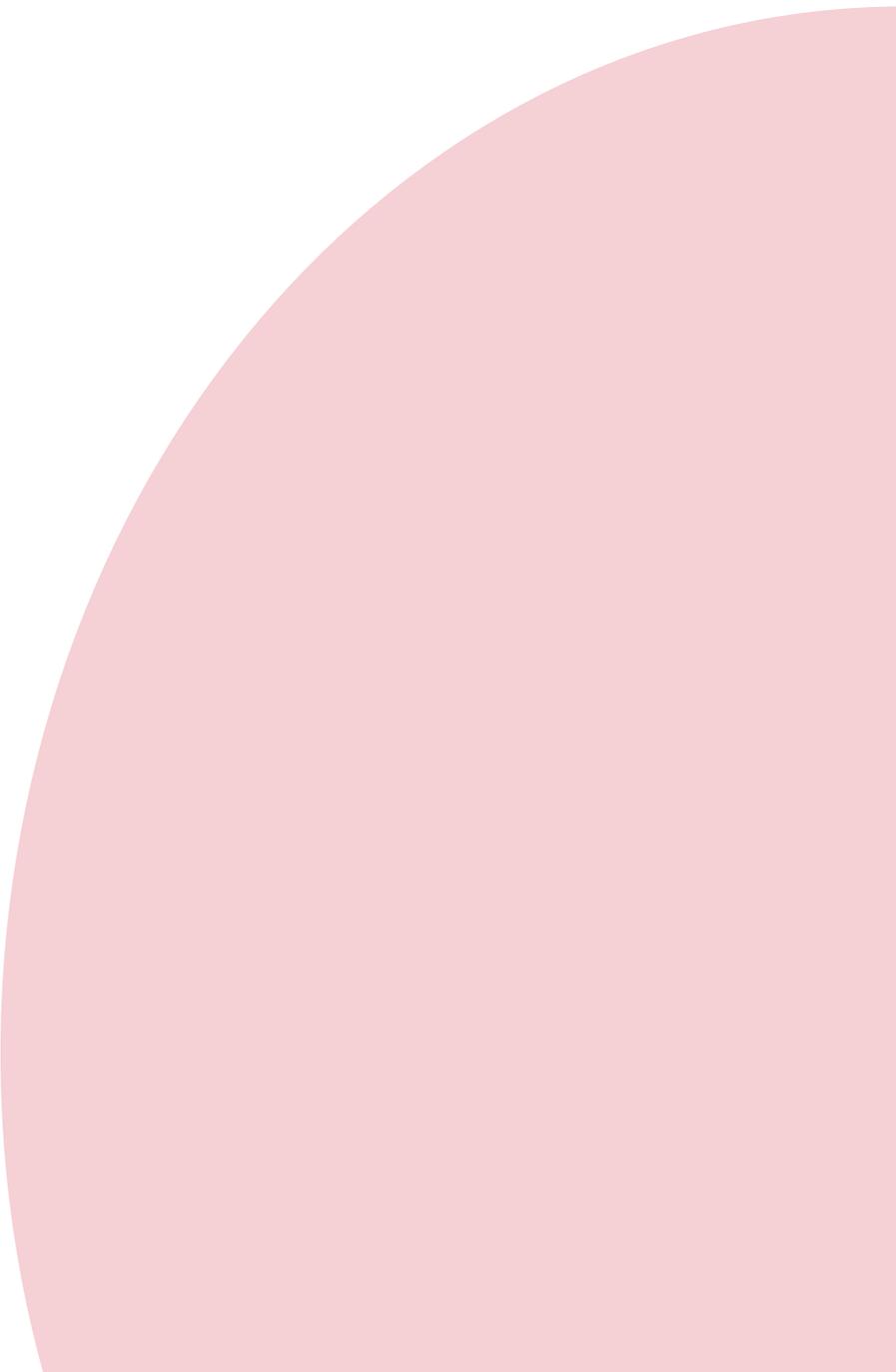
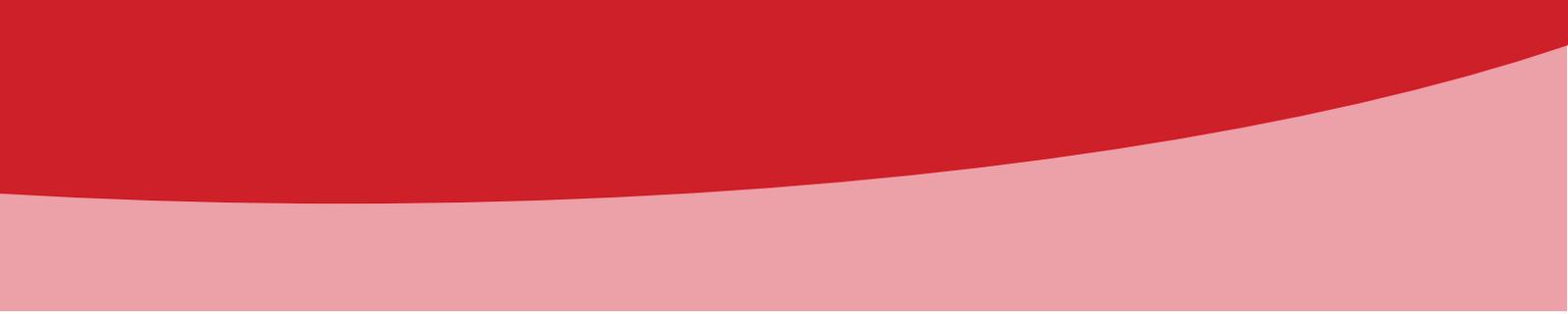
Newton-le-Willows is one of the oldest settlements in St Helens Borough. It developed as a small market town to service the agricultural community of the surrounding area. The area remained sparsely populated until the industrial revolution in the late 18th and 19th centuries. Today, the original layout of Newton-le-Willows remains unchanged. High Street, the principal street cutting across Newton-le-Willows, is the main highway and contains most of the buildings; large detached houses are scattered in the surrounding area.

In 1976, in recognition of the quality of this area St Helens Council declared two sections of Newton-le-Willows as areas of special interest: the High Street and Willow Park Conservation Areas respectively. This appraisal is aimed at reviewing these designations in order to help preserve and enhance them.



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# 1.0 Introduction

## 1.0 Introduction

Newton-le-Willows is a small town between Wigan and Warrington on the A49. It originally developed as a market serving the agricultural community of the surrounding area, which was widely scattered in isolated farmhouses.

The area remained sparsely populated until the industrial revolution in the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century and early 19<sup>th</sup> Century. By this time it had developed as a small market town on the coaching routes between London and Scotland as well as from Liverpool to Hull (Perks, 1980).

Despite the growth of the town, the High Street retains the original village character with many properties attractively grouped at the back of the pavement or behind small front gardens. St. Peters Church and the Oak Tree Inn provide a visual anchor to either end of this street. Some of the surrounding areas to the north, south and west have been developed but the areas further north and to the east have retained the agricultural character of large open spaces with scattered isolated houses.

In recognition of its distinctiveness and potential threats to its uniqueness, two parts of Newton-le-Willows were designated as conservation areas in 1976. The areas around the High Street, Church Street and Park Road North were designated as the High Street Conservation Area and the parkland to the east as Willow Park Conservation Area.

The two areas have different qualities, which make them worthy of this designation. The High Street being protected mainly for its buildings, street pattern and spaces, and the Willow Park is designated for its environmental qualities.

Designation, however, is not an end in itself. It is recommended that the Council along with other interest groups and residents should be aware of those elements that contribute to a conservation area's uniqueness (English Heritage, 2006). Accordingly, further to clarifying the designation of the conservation area, this appraisal is intended to highlight these elements.

### **What Does Conservation Area Status Mean?**

A conservation area is an area of special architectural or historic interest, which is considered worthy of special attention, protection and improvement (DoE, 1990). Rather than individual buildings, it is a combination of buildings, street pattern, trees, open spaces and other features, which give a conservation area its distinct character. Within the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the

local authority has powers, which enable it to control development, which could damage the area's character and appearance.

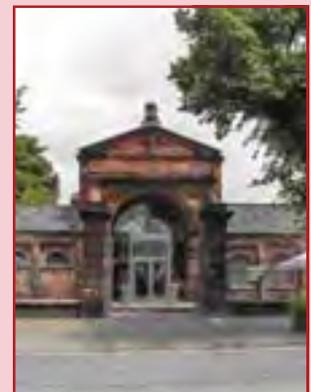
The purpose of a conservation area designation is not to prevent change but to manage it in the interests of the existing character of the area. Accordingly, designation requires that the local authority formulate and publish proposals for their preservation and enhancement. Local residents and property owners also have a major role to play by ensuring that properties are regularly maintained and original features are retained.



### 1.1 Purpose of Appraisal

This appraisal is aimed at:

- Identifying, defining and analysing those factors that make the two parts of Newton-le-Willows areas of special architectural and historic interest;
- Providing property owners and potential developers with clear guidance on planning matters and the types of development, which are likely to be acceptable within the conservation areas; and,
- As material consideration, providing the Council with the basis for dealing with applications for development, where applicants need to demonstrate how their proposals take account of the essential character of the conservation areas.



Beyond their use as planning tools, appraisals have a much wider application, as educational and informative documents for the local community.

This appraisal has been undertaken in accordance with current English Heritage guidance (2006) and represents a factual and objective analysis of the two conservation areas in Newton-le-Willows. It has involved:

- A thorough survey and visual appraisal of the area within and beyond the existing conservation areas' boundary.
- A desktop study including reference to previously published studies for the area, archive material, aerial photographs, relevant national and local policies and liaison with relevant organisations.
- An analysis and evaluation of the information gathered, identifying key issues for consultation purposes.

# 2.0 Planning Policy Content

## 2.1 Planning Legislation

The process of designation and the review of Conservation Areas in England has been influenced by three Acts:

### The Civic Amenities Act 1967

This is the first legislation, which provided powers Local Authorities to designate as Conservation Areas, areas that they considered to be 'special'.

### The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 – “The Act”

'The Act' consolidated the powers provided by the Civic Amenities Act. Areas of 'the Act' concerning the designation and review of Conservation Areas are covered under sections 69 and 71 respectively:

i) Section 69

Under section 69(1), every local planning authority:

- a. Shall from time to time determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest the character of which is desirable to preserve and enhance.
- b. Shall designate those areas as Conservation Areas.

ii) Section 71

This Section 71 also places statutory duty on a Local Planning Authority to, “from time to time formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their areas which are Conservation Areas”. This covers the preparation of management plans for the two areas which will be undertaken after the appraisal.

The designation of High Street and Willow Park in Newton as Conservation Areas by St Helens Council is a fulfilment of this statutory obligation.

Under section 69(2), The Act further places a duty on the local planning authority from time to time to review the designated Conservation Areas. This appraisal is in fulfilment of this other statutory requirement

### Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

Under Section 38(6), this Act further requires a determination of planning applications to be made in accordance with provisions of the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. It is further advised:

*“A clear definition of those elements, which contribute to the special architectural or historic interest of a place, will enable development of a robust policy framework for the future management of that area, against which the application is made”.*

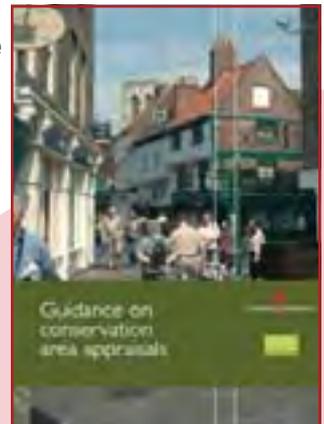
Accordingly, this appraisal will be a material consideration, under the provisions of this Act.

### 2.2 Planning Guidance

It is under PPG 15 that the content of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is clarified. It highlights the need to protect physical survivals of the past to form part of the nation's cultural heritage and aid the sense of national identity.

The key area concerning conservation areas is in Section 4 (4) of PPG 15 where:

- Local Planning Authorities are required to define and record the special interest, character and appearance of all Conservation Areas in its area.
- Some of the aspects that will always form the basis for a coherent evaluation are outlined.



The following policies provide guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals:

- *Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals* (2006) by English Heritage, offers a framework for the appraisal as well as suggestions on next steps after the process.
- Planning Policy Guidance (PPG15): *Planning and the Historic Environment* (1994), the key government guidance on all development affecting historical buildings, conservation areas and sites of archaeological interest.



The wider policy context is provided by:

- Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the Northwest (September 2008) which identifies the need to ensure active management of the region's environmental and cultural assets.
- St Helens Unitary Development Plan (UDP, 1998)
- St Helens Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document (SPD, 2007)

# 3.0 Location and Setting

## 3.1 Location and context

The High Street and Willow Park Conservation Areas are located in Newton-le-Willows.

Newton-le-Willows is situated in the South Lancashire plain between Manchester and Liverpool some five miles east of St. Helens. It comprises the most eastern part of the St Helens Metropolitan Borough area sharing boundaries with Greater Manchester, Wigan and Warrington.

Newton-le-Willows comprises of two wards - Earlestown to the west, which is primarily a product of the Industrial Revolution and Newton to the east including the medieval village centred on High Street, the focus of the conservation areas.

Newton-le-Willows is bounded to the north by the A580 East Lancashire Road, to the east by the M6 motorway and further south by the M62. The A49 linking Wigan and Warrington passes through the two conservation areas. It is the principal road in Newton, forming Mill Lane, Church Street, High Street and Ashton Road. The A572 connects Newton-le-Willows to Leigh and other areas further east, as well as to St Helens to the west.

The Liverpool and Manchester railway line runs through the southern part of the area with stations at Earlestown and Newton-le-Willows, the latter being in the Willow Park Conservation Area. Its proximity to major road and rail networks has facilitated easy access to surrounding major commercial centres.

## 3.2 General character and plan form

The eastern end of Newton-le-Willows where the two conservation areas are, has essentially maintained a significant part of its historical layout consisting of:

- A medieval settlement retaining a strong historic pattern centred on High Street.
- Surrounding large areas of varied open space with sparsely scattered groups of isolated farmhouses.

The two conservation areas are formed from the following layouts:

### High Street Conservation Area

Based on the medieval settlement, this conservation area derives its plan form mainly from the linear built up area that runs on a northwest-southeast axis along



High Street. Groups of buildings lie along either side of this broad, tree-lined, slightly curving street. The busy High Street and the compact nature of the buildings add some vitality to this former market town.

### Willow Park Conservation Area

This area derives its plan form from the landscape features of Willow Park, Newton Lake and the surrounding open farmland. The woodland and the various isolated buildings together with the lake and its associated wildlife, results in the area having a natural/rural feel.

## 3.3 Landscape setting and Geology

### Landscape setting

Newton-le-Willows is on raised ground and is generally flat, only slightly undulating in the south and west (Land Use Consultants, 2006). It is located at the confluence of two river valleys – the Sankey Brook, which borders to the southwest and Newton Brook to the east, south and north. Both river valleys offer some containment to its setting. The area is urban with rural surroundings and has a complex urban edge with different boundary characters, including (Land Use Consultants, 2006):

- The Sankey Valley;
- Two railway lines, the Liverpool - Manchester railway line and Earlestown to Warrington;
- Settlement edge; and,
- The M6 motorway.

The Sankey Valley forms a strong edge to the south of Newton-le-Willows. The boundary is formed by a (double) waterway and some riparian vegetation and property fencing reinforcing the valley landform. The dipping down into the Sankey Valley and crossing the river emphasise the sense of arrival from the west. The two railway lines, to the south (Earlestown to Warrington) and to the east (Liverpool to Manchester railway lines) partially contain the south-eastern edge of the settlement. The Vulcan Village (also a conservation area) provides a strong sense of arrival from the south.

The north-eastern edge of the settlement forms a fairly robust edge comprising back gardens and associated vegetation, and mature woodland belts to adjacent fields. Beyond the immediate settlement is the gently curving line of the M6 motorway corridor raised on embankments, forming an immediate visual horizon.

### Geology

The Geology of the area is essentially made up of the following features (Philpott, 1987; Perks, 1980; Farrer and Brownbill, 1911):

- Boulder clay overlying sandstone with coal measures at a moderate depth, fringing the western and north-western borders with the exception of Willow Park.
- Pebble beds of the Bunter series of new red sandstone underlying the greater part of the township.
- Bands of Manchester marls and glacial sands and gravel on the park.
- Alluvium deposits in the river valleys of the Sankey and Newton Brooks.

# 4.0 Historical Background

## 4.1 Historical origins

Newton-le-Willows is one of the oldest and most historic settlements in the Borough of St Helens. There is evidence of Neolithic occupation and to the north of Newton Lake an ancient barrow exists now thought to be the motte of an early castle. Between AD69 and AD77 the Romans built a road that crosses the Mersey at Wilderspool on route to Preston and Lancaster, archaeological evidence of which has been found in the Newton area. The Manor of Newton is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086, where it was included in the Hundred of Newton.

During the medieval period Newton developed as a settlement serving the agricultural community of the surrounding area, receiving its first charter for a market and a fair in 1257 and for a second market and two fairs in 1301. The markets existed in High Street until the nineteenth century when they transferred to Earlestown.

The area remained sparsely populated until the impact of the industrial revolution in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1757, the first canal of the Industrial Revolution, the Sankey or St Helens Canal was constructed, skirting Newton to the South, to be followed in 1830 by the Liverpool and Manchester Railway. The area became a focus for rail related development including the Vulcan Foundry and its associated model village while Earlestown grew rapidly to cater for the influx of new industrial workers, mainly associated with the Viaduct Wagon Works.

The population of Newton increased from 2139 in 1831 to 10,580 by 1881. Reflecting this growth, the Urban District of Newton-in-Makerfield was created in 1894, with the name being changed to Newton-le-Willows in 1939. According to the 2005 estimates, the population of this area is 21,347, 10,553 in Earlestown and 10,794 in Newton (St Helens Council, 2007)

## 4.2 Resultant pattern of development

Before the Industrial Revolution, Newton-le-Willows was a small settlement, centred on High Street, serving the agricultural community of the surrounding area.

The earliest map of Newton dated 1745 shows the medieval structure of the settlement. Property boundaries run at right angles from the linear market street some of which, particularly on the east side, can still be traced today.

Newton High Street was described in 1784 as “a wide unpaved street with thatched cottages interspersed with a few uneven houses” (Perks, 1980). Numbers 158, 160 and 173 High Street and numbers 2 and 4 Ashton Road are surviving examples of these early cottages, though substantially altered.

## 4.0 Historical Background

The tithe map of 1839 and the Ordnance Survey Map of 1849 show an almost continuous row of houses on the North side of High Street, with just a few intervals on the South side, except between the line of the present Golborne Street and St. Peter's Church. At this time Newton-le-Willows was a typical small English market town, with a residential and market street extending westwards from the church. The early effects of the industrial revolution were few.

The major changes and additions to the built-up area came in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Little change took place on the north side of the High Street, but the cottages on the south side were replaced by terraced development. By 1893 most of the north side and part of the south side of Mercer Street had been developed.

By the 1930's Newton High Street showed the culmination of several generations of frontage development. The street had continuous frontages on either side, which included a whole range of uses indicative of a small town community.

Since the 1930's High Street has lost part of this sense of community. The process of addition, alteration and redevelopment has proceeded, especially on the north side, but this nature of change reflects the needs and scale of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Large houses and terraces, which were built on the pavement line, have been replaced by buildings serving a different purpose which, being set back from the street, break up the effect of continuous enclosure that existed before World War II.

Willow Park Conservation Area adjoins the eastern end of the High Street. The character is very different, although its development coincides with the main period of expansion in the High Street from 1850 onwards.

Newton Lake was formed in 1852 – 53. The Wigan Times of 1853 described it as being “intended as an ornament to the new and elegant villas to be built in this ancient and healthy town”. In the event only two of the proposed 96 units were built – Mere House and Redclyffe. Two other large properties, the Willow Bank and the Willows were owned by the McCorquodale family, industrialists who owned printing works near Newton Station. The Willows was demolished in the 1930's and the grounds later acquired for public use as Willow Park. Also in the 1930's, Mssrs McCorquodales built the Willow Bank Estate for some of its key employees.

### 4.3 Archaeological interest

Newton is one of the only five medieval towns within the County of Merseyside, which for a number of reasons is considered to be of the most archaeological and historical importance (Philpott, 1987).

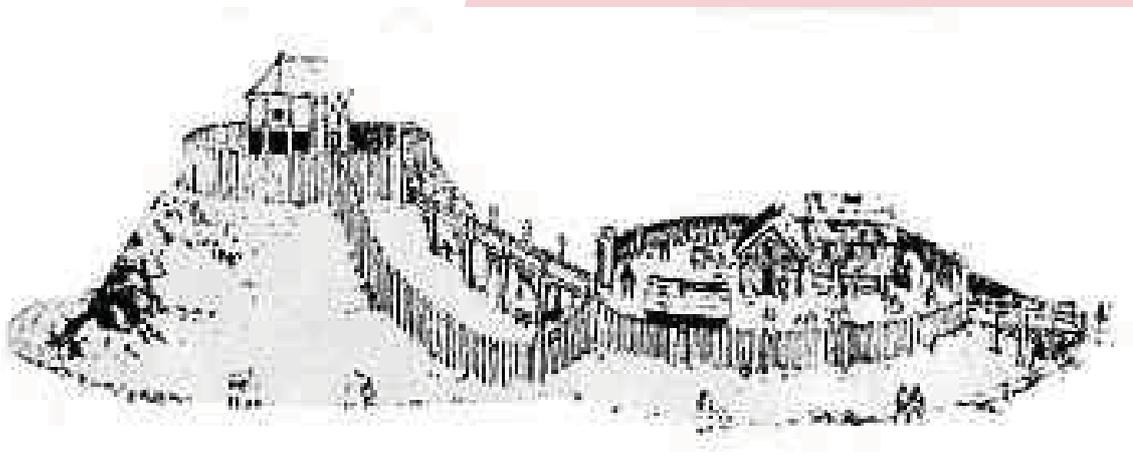
## 4.0 Historical Background

Firstly, Newton, an important focus of settlement, was founded in the late Anglo-Saxon period as a royal manor, and remained the principal administrative centre of the large Fee of Makerfield long after the Norman Conquest. The motte and bailey castle in Castle Hill is evidence of the settlement's high status. Secondly, it is one of the few towns in South Lancashire that retained its burghal status throughout the medieval period.

Studies of the township have identified the following areas as having particular archaeological significance (Philpott, 1987):

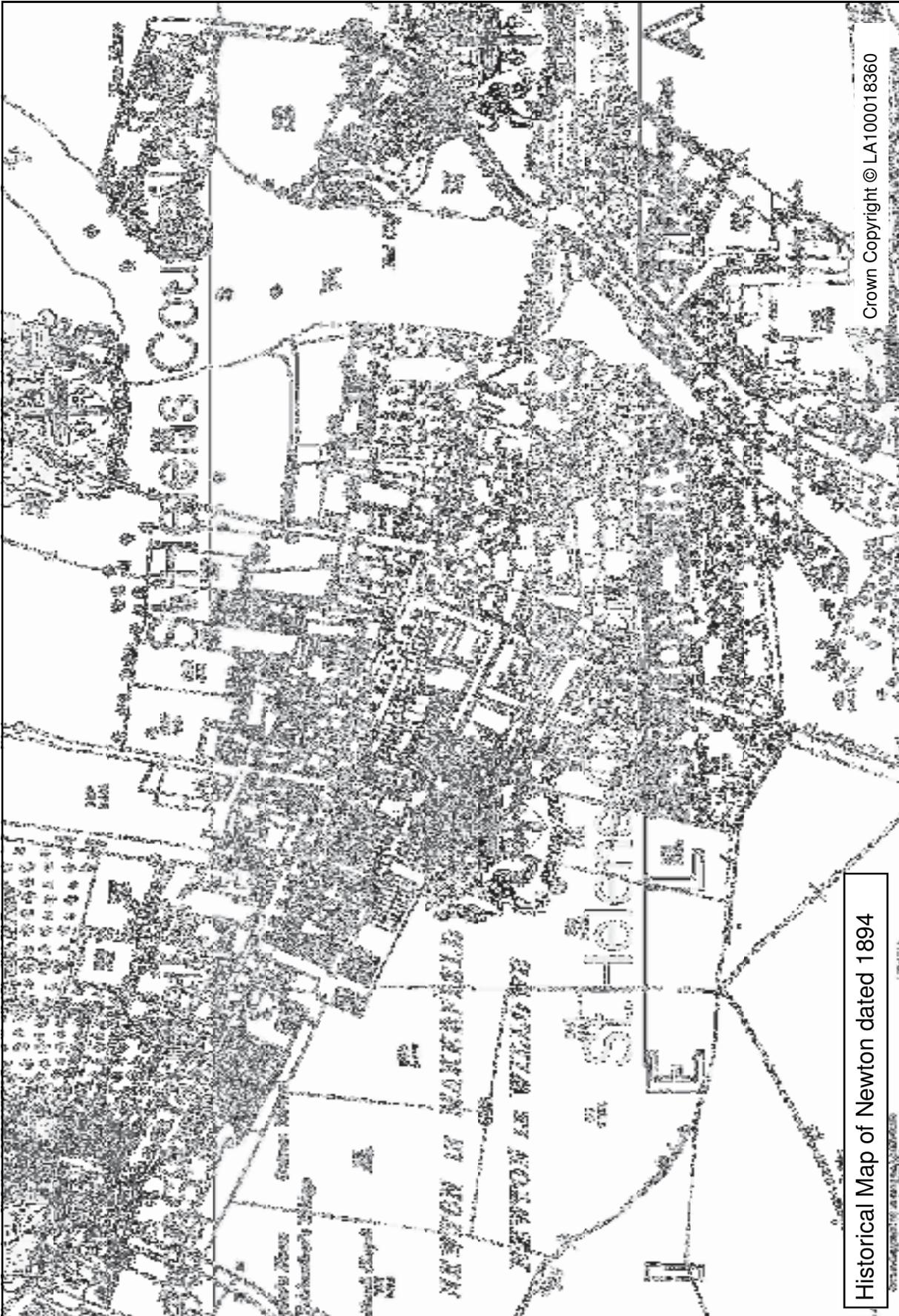
- Eastern section of High Street, which was the medieval town and Borough of Newton.
- Willow Park and the church car park, which were the site of the original chapel.
- Church Street, which was probably the early focus of the settlement.

Castle Hill, formerly thought to have been an ancient burial mound, is however the town's most significant archaeological remains. Now a Scheduled Ancient Monument, the M6 motorway may have cut the outer bailey. There is no surviving documentary evidence of the date of construction of the castle, but the motte and bailey is characteristically an early type of castle construction, not widely employed after the 12<sup>th</sup> Century (Brown 1976 quoted in Philpott, 1987).



Artists impression of an ancient burial mound

4.0 Historical Background



# 5.0 Spatial Analysis

## 5.1 The character and interrelation of spaces

There are several public and private open spaces, which contribute to the character of the two conservation areas and help to create a balance between open space and built up areas.

## 5.2 High Street Conservation Area

### A. Open Spaces

Despite the High Street frontage being almost completely built up there are some open spaces of interest:

i) Amenity spaces

These are small amenity spaces within the conservation area (see plan on page 22), including:

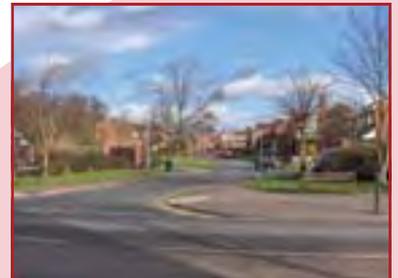
- The junction between the Parchments and High Street.
- The gardens of the old Vicarage and the Willows.
- The front gardens along Park Road North.

The junction between the Parchments and High Street is a landscaped area with mature trees. Open space contributes to the landscape and local amenity of the area. In addition to its recreational value, it also opens up views to the adjacent Grade II listed 'Archway to the Randall's Nursery'.

The front gardens of properties along Park Road North are landscaped with mature trees and hedges bounded by low brick walls. Some of them still have original metal railings on coping stones and metal gates on brick piers.

Among other benefits, these gardens:

- Provide a backdrop and immediate setting for the houses in Park Road North.



- Provide a clear hierarchy of space from the public road and footways to the gardens, and then private houses.
- The trees and hedges create soft landscaping in the public realm; and,
- Help to define two spatial zones of private domain and public realm.

The mature gardens in the Vicarage and the Willows also add some ‘softening’ touches; enhancing the appearance of these properties.

### ii) The forecourt at The Pied Bull Hotel

The Pied Bull Hotel is set back from the street behind a large forecourt, which is mainly used for car parking and outdoor seating. This open space provides a contrast to the rigid building line provided by the terraces fronting the highway on the opposite side of the street. It is hard landscaped and furnished with several seats, providing an important socialising point in the conservation area.



### iii) The grounds of the Oak Tree Inn

As with the Pied Bull Hotel, this open space is hard landscaped and used for car parking and outdoor seating. However, given its location at the edge of the conservation area and at the back of the public house, it does not contribute as much to the area.



### iv) St Peters Churchyard

This is the largest public open space in the High Street Conservation Area, a car park in tarmac forming a significant part. A sandstone wall topped with a metal railing forms the boundary to it. The cemetery and the grounds of The Vicarage and Willow House are well covered with mature trees, making it a visual extension of the adjacent Willow Park. The large open space and tall trees provide a soft landscape to the church.



## **B. Key Views and Vistas**

There are five main approaches into the High Street Conservation Area (see plan on page 54):

### i) Park Road North

Mature trees frame the street in the long view towards High Street Conservation Area from this approach. On entering the area, which begins at number 36, a row of semi-detached properties set behind mature gardens and trees dominate the view. The white, three-storey building at number 12-18 High Street terminates this long view.



The High Street Conservation Area also extends into a small section of Willow Road. A view out into Willow Road is dominated by the two-storey properties outside the area. A short two-storey red brick terrace, numbers 1, 3 and 5 that is part of the conservation area, is visible to the left of this long view.



### ii) Crow Lane East

Crow Lane East curves gently to the left as it approaches High Street. A view from this approach is dominated, on the right, by frontages of terraced properties set back behind small front gardens. However the main view as the road enters the conservation area is that of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century properties at number 158-160 High Street with tall trees behind them.



### iii) Ashton Road and High Street

The former Magistrate's Court closes the short view of High Street from Ashton Road. Its location near the end of High Street, its size and fine architectural details make it a landmark building.



Further ahead, continuous frontages of bricked terraced properties lie behind a wide tree-lined gentle curving road with grey roofs and brick chimneys dominating the sky line, this is a main vista of High Street from this approach. In the absence of any particular focal point, the gentle curve draws the traveller along the street, until the Church of St. Peters becomes visible, providing a visual anchor to High Street.

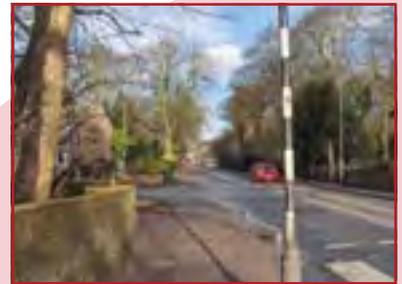
### iii) Rob Lane

This road runs on a north-easterly south-westerly direction from surrounding areas to the east of Newton-le-Willows. The Blue Lion Pub on High Street dominates view of High Street Conservation Area from this approach. Further along is a row of terraced properties on Golborne Street in similar Victorian features to those in High Street.



### iv) Church Street

This approach is characterised by a gentle upward slope through the tall trees of the wooded Willow Park, emphasising the sense of arrival into the conservation area.



## 5.2 Willow Park Conservation Area

### A. Open Spaces

Willow Park Conservation Area comprises a large predominantly wooded area forming Willow Park, Newton Lake and private gardens to dwellings in Mere Road:

#### i) Newton Lake

The lake abuts Willow Park to the east and covers an area of about 6.5 hectares. It was created by a strong dam across the valley through which Newton Brook flowed. It is a habitat to a number of wildlife species including water birds.

At the southwest of the lake is Willow Park, a very pleasant area of mature trees and grassy areas, overlooked by the nearby St Peters Church. To the northwest of the site are fields and open land that extend beyond the busy M6 motorway. The entire east bank of the lake is private, whilst at the southern end, below the dam, extensive management and landscaping work has been carried out. Newton Brook leaves the southwestern corner of the lake.

Accordingly, in addition to supporting wildlife, the lake provides panoramic views of surrounding landscape and buildings, making it an important feature of the Willow Park Conservation Area. These views together with the birds swimming and the sound generated by the water flowing under the dam make the lake an area for relaxation.

#### ii) Private gardens to dwellings in Mere Road

These consist of the grounds of the large detached Victorian and later period villas along Mere Road on the eastern side of Newton Lake. These well-landscaped gardens with mature trees provide a backdrop to the buildings in Mere Road and also complement the woodlands of Willow Park. The size and nature of these gardens are a statement of the historic status of the buildings in this area.



## **B. Key Views and Vistas**

There are four main approaches into the Willow Park Conservation Area (see plan on page 54):

i) Park Road South

The narrow historic railway bridge between this street and Park Road North, acting as a gateway, dominates the views on this approach. Past the bridge is Park Road North, which extends into the High Street Conservation Area.

ii) High Street

The imposing feature of St Peters Church marks the entrance into Willow Park Conservation Area, which is further down from this northwesterly approach. Its size and location at the corner of the street makes it visible from several directions, making it another landmark building. Further into the conservation area, mature trees on either side frame Church Street.

iii) Southworth Road

This approach is characterised by a gentle downward slope cutting across raised ground and a sharp change of direction as the street reaches the northeastern edges of Willow Park. An arched sandstone entrance into Newton Lake dwarfed by thick woodlands is the short view, as the road swiftly curves to the left. Mature trees on either side of the road as it joins Mill Lane is the long view on this road. The service station on Mill Lane terminates this view.

iv) Mill Lane

As with the Railway Bridge between Park Road South and North, the Mill Lane Viaduct cutting across the street dominates the views on the approach from Mill Lane. The downward slope to this approach and the bend of the road as it goes through the arch, accentuates the 'gateway' entrance feel into the conservation area.

### 5.3 Key spaces outside the conservation areas

There are many green spaces immediately outside the conservation areas that provide a positive contribution to the overall character of the area. The most significant of these are:

i) Mesnes Park

Mesnes Park on the southern edge of Newton is a multifunctional green space combining sports and recreational activities. Sports facilities include several football pitches of various surfaces, skate boarding facilities and a children's play area. It also has areas of woodland, a variety of wildflowers and a network of footpaths, making it a visual extension to the adjacent Willow Park.



ii) Elms Farm

This agricultural open space on the northeastern and western sides of High Street and Willow Park Conservation Areas respectively, provides a contrasting landscape of a different scale and character to that of Mesnes Park. On its western end, this open agricultural land allows the High Street Conservation Area, particularly the group of historical farmhouses and stables to the north of the listed cottages (nos. 158 and 160 High Street), to remain in their traditional rural setting. Extending eastwards to Willow Park and the woodland and grassland north of the M6, it provides views out of the Willow Park Conservation Area from its eastern edge.



### 5.4 Internal views and vistas

In addition to the views from the main approaches into Newton, there are several internal views and vistas of interest in the two conservation areas. These are mainly at:

i) Street Junctions

There are several nodes at the junctions of secondary streets within the two conservation areas, which provide interesting internal views. Many of these buildings mark the junction of the main A49 road with other streets and that of Park Road North

with Willow Road. The size and location of such buildings make them visible from a distance and from many directions. At the end of a terrace, they also act as visual backstops to a group of buildings. As dominant features in the townscape, they contribute to the character of the area.

### ii) On changes in street directions or land levels

There are several changes in street directions and levels where views open up creating a sense of anticipation. Buildings located at such points close views and become focal points/landmarks in an area. Examples of such dramatic views include:

- Buildings on the High Street from the Church Street approach where the land slopes upwards slightly and curves to the left.
- Buildings on Southworth Road as it changes direction out of the Willow Park Conservation Area.
- Willow Bank from Southworth Road, as Willow Bank Estate slopes upwards.

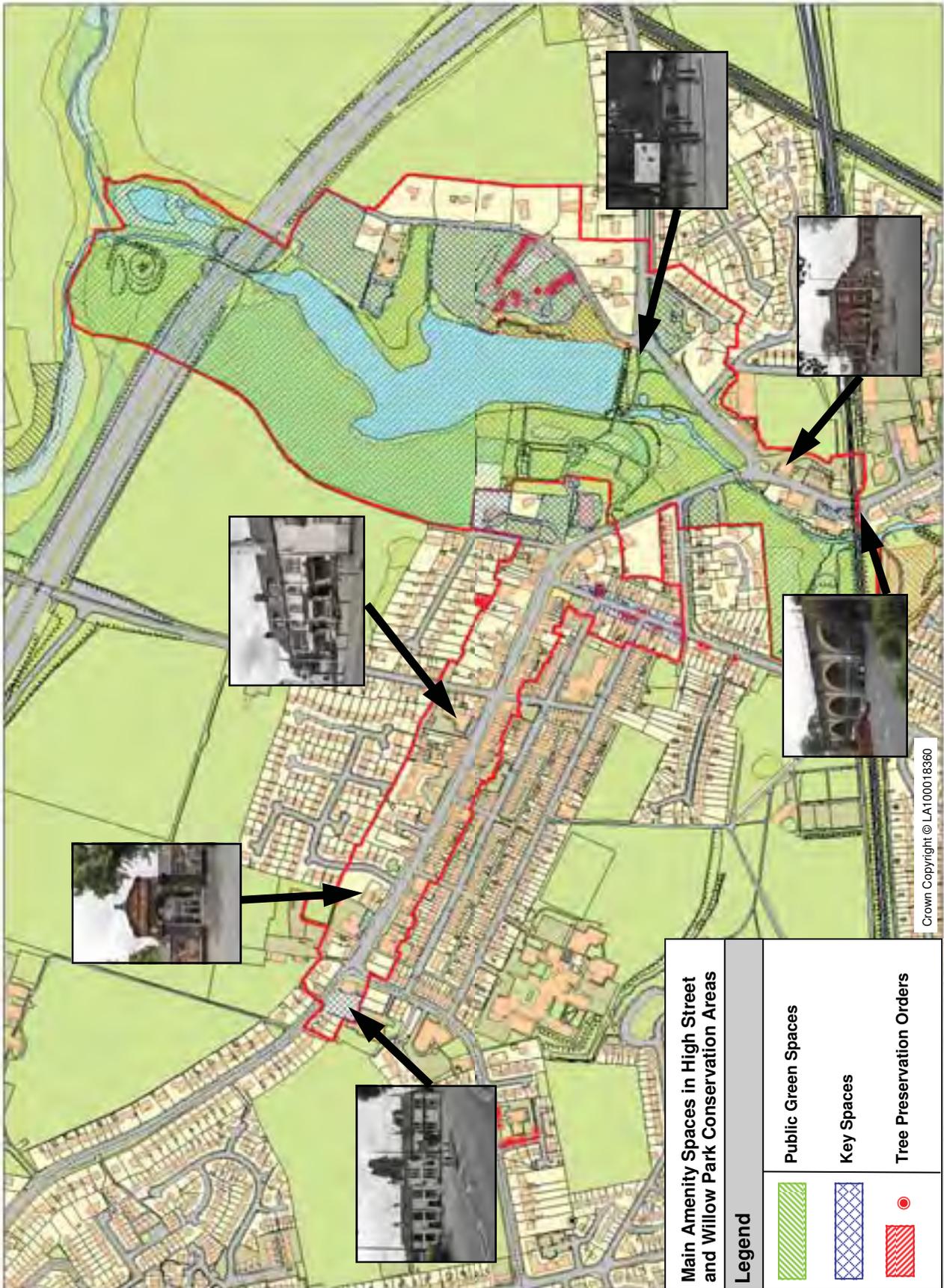
### iii) Gaps between buildings and terraces

There are also several gaps and openings in the conservation areas where space leaks out into other streets creating interesting views. Examples include:

- Views along Birley Street and Mercer Street from Park Road North, revealing long and narrow streets fronted by rows of terraces.
- Views from footpaths and open areas within the heavily wooded Willow Park reveal glimpses of the landscape, buildings and facilities beyond the park; and,
- Panoramic views from Newton Lake of the landscape and buildings.



## 5.0 Spatial Analysis



# 6.0 Character Area Analysis

## 6.1 An Overview

The two conservation areas of High Street and Willow Park are related yet have distinct individual characters. Whilst the former is generally characterised by a compact group of buildings lined along two thoroughfares of High Street and Park Road North, Willow Park Conservation Area is more open with small groups of buildings sparsely scattered within a large open space.

These variations in character are also evident within the individual conservation areas. High Street for instance, is comprised of a more compact group of mix use properties, mainly in long rows of terraces forming an almost continuous frontage. Park Road North in the same conservation area, is of a lesser density and is comprised of a group of semi-detached residential properties set behind mature front gardens.

The other striking feature of the two conservation areas is the variety of styles, forms and types of buildings within them. This ranges from the relatively modest cottages around the Ashton Road - High Street – Crow Lane East intersection to the opulent and large detached houses within Willow Park. The two conservation areas are therefore not homogeneous but contain several sub-areas of varying characters.

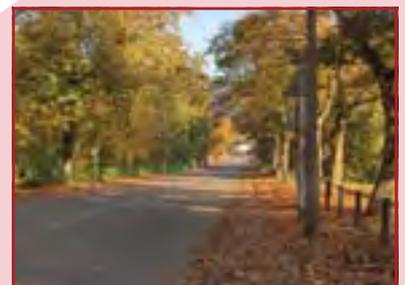
Accordingly, the two areas can be divided into four distinct character areas, which will be used for this analysis:

High Street Conservation Area:

- A: High Street**
- B: Park Road North**

Willow Park Conservation Area:

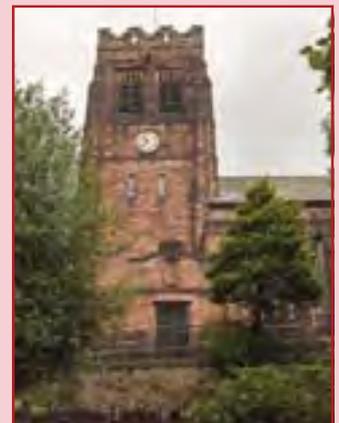
- C: Willow Park**
- D: Newton Station/Legh Arms**



## 6.0 Character Area Analysis

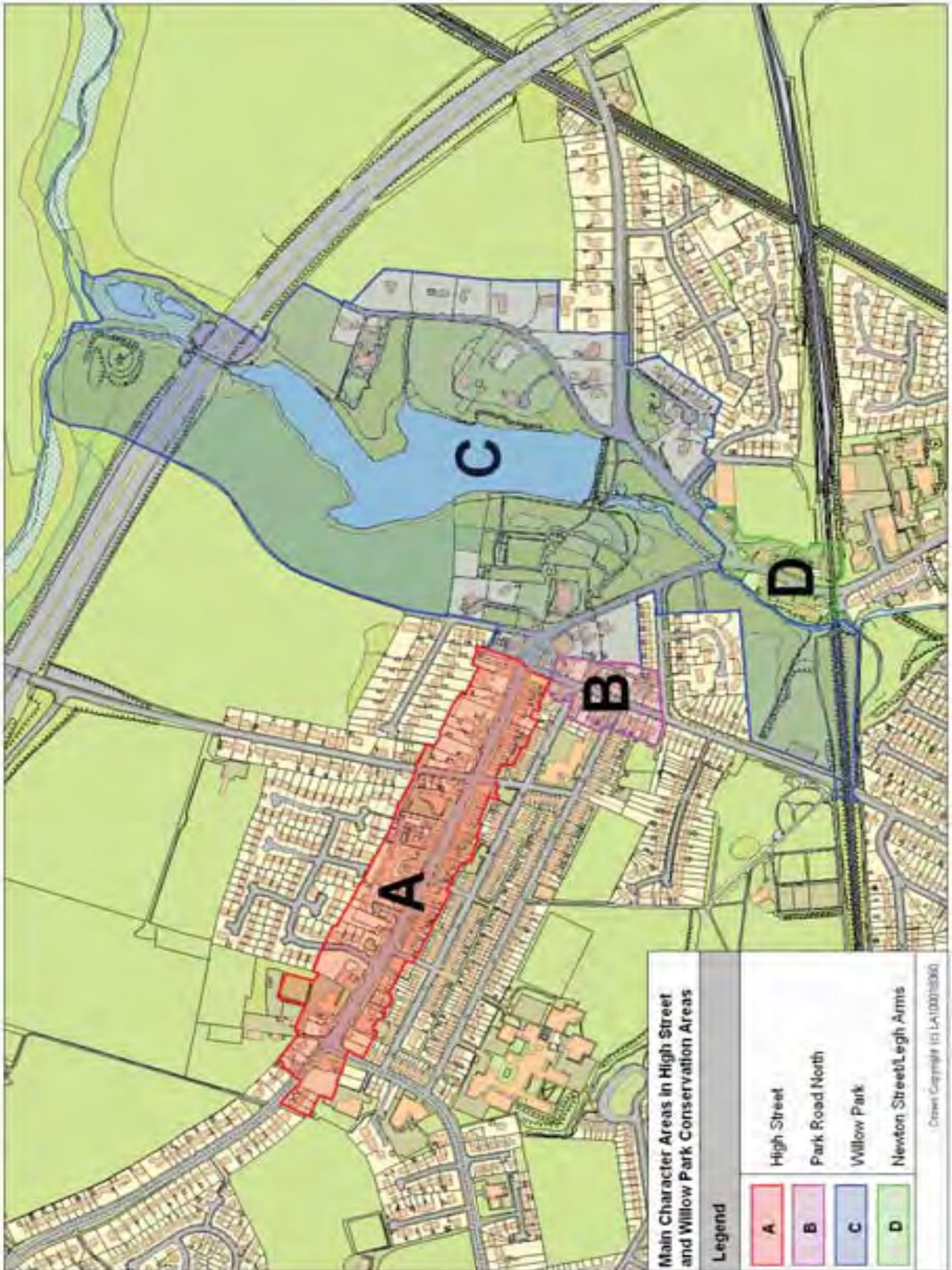
The character areas will each be analysed under:

- General character: Activities and prevailing uses and their influence on the plan form and buildings.
- Public realm audit.
- Street furniture.
- Architectural Character: The qualities of the buildings and their contributions to the area.
- Shopfronts
- Key Individual Buildings: Including listed and unlisted buildings
- Open spaces and their contribution made to the character of the area.
- Other buildings: Those that contributed to the townscape of the area.



One of the character areas, Willow Park, extends into the High Street Conservation Area. The scale and the more open character of the group of buildings around the Church of St Peters is considered more in common with those in Mere Road within the Willow Park Conservation Area than those in High Street.

## 6.0 Character Area Analysis



### 6.2 High Street Conservation Area

#### A: High Street

This character area includes the whole of High Street as well as sections of Crow Lane East, Ashton Road and Church Street.

#### A1: General character

High Street in Newton-le-Willows follows a historic growth pattern, which developed during medieval times when traders congregated around traditional market places. In such cases permanent shops rather than market stalls were gradually established in town and village centres alongside the main routes, which became the high streets.

Today, High Street in Newton-le-Willows is a mixed use area with commercial properties accounting for nearly 45% of the properties. Most of these offices and retail outlets were not purpose built but were usually converted dwelling houses. Many of them are situated mainly between Walmsley Street and Golborne Street to the west side, and between Rob Lane and the small modern housing estate known as Rokeden.

Being the A49 connection between the main regional towns of Wigan and Warrington, and also an alternative route to the M6 motorway between these two, High Street is a busy road throughout the day.

The High Street still preserves some of its original features including its structure and layout. Regarding the structure of the medieval borough, especially to the north-east side, some property boundaries correspond to those of the 1745 map. On the south-west side of the street, the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century expansion of the town and the construction of Birley Street and Mercer Street to the rear has disrupted the pattern of medieval boundaries, although here too there has been some northwest-southeast plot division that echoes the medieval burgage plots.

The historical street layout is characterised by linear grouping of mixed-use buildings of similar characteristics, on either side of a



## 6.0 Character Area Analysis

broad, tree-lined slightly curving road. There appears to be little conscious design in the buildings of High Street. Rather, the buildings show a natural evolution of vernacular building methods, which even over a period of three centuries provide their own harmony. The Pied Bull Hotel, the arched entrance to Randall's Nurseries, the former Magistrate's Court and the Oak Tree Inn on Crow Lane East are exceptions, reflecting the greater importance attached to those buildings.

The proportions of the elevations are domestic in scale and though not necessarily consciously designed, they provide a unified appearance. There are several "improvements" and modern infill developments, which do not respect the simplicity and place in which the houses were built. Examples of such buildings include properties at 20-22 (the National Auto Care Garage) and 151-157 High Street.

The modern infill development on 151-157 High Street is in the form of two-storey semi-detached properties set back behind small landscaped front gardens. Though they are significantly set back from the street and their modern style does not respond to the general character of this area. The scale and layout of number 20-22 High Street also does not respond to the character of the area.

Despite the density of development, the High Street is wide and this gives a sense of spaciousness. The lanes and gaps at the end of terraces further afford access and glimpses beyond, adding some degree of permeability to this area.

The character of High Street changes towards the Ashton Road end of the street, in terms of the building line and compactness of the area. The strong building line provided by the continuous frontage is broken where terraced properties from 107a to 131 (odd) are set back from the street, behind small walled front gardens with hedges and shrubs that add some soft landscaping to the streetscene.

The compactness of the street is also broken between Cobden Street and Crow Lane East. The buildings from numbers 135 to 173 (odd) High Street vary in size, age, scale and type. They range from the small and modest 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Century cottages at the corner of Crow Lane East and High Street to the large and elaborately detailed former Magistrate's Court (159 to 171 High Street), which has now been subdivided into flats. They are around the same age as many of the properties in High Street and their design and scale add variety to this character area.

The density of the buildings on the north-eastern side of High Street also decreases slightly. The properties are in smaller terraces, detached or semi-detached with wider frontages. Compared to the other side of the road, this is less compact and uniform.

The south-eastern side of Crow Lane East as it joins High Street contains a group of 19<sup>th</sup> Century properties of similar style and scale to those in High Street and Mercer Street. Dated around the same time and with similar characteristics, this area relates to both Mercer Street

## 6.0 Character Area Analysis

and High Street.

### A2: Public realm audit

This is the space between and within buildings that are publicly accessible, including streets, squares, forecourts, parks and open spaces.

High Street has recently been subject to a comprehensive Single Regeneration Budget Scheme (SRB) that included street improvements, creating an attractive environment for business and visitors. While the road surface remained in black bitmac, different materials were used for the footpaths (which were originally in black bitmac), creating a contrast between vehicular and pedestrian areas.

Two main materials were used for the footpaths:

- Concrete slabs for residential properties.
- Coloured paving blocks for commercial properties.

Though the above surface treatments helps to differentiate between the two user areas, traditional or more sympathetic materials could have been used for the residential properties. Unfortunately important open spaces in the area like the Pied Bull Hotel and Oak Tree Inn were not covered in this scheme and they still remain in black bitmac. This provides an opportunity for enhancement.

### A3: Street furniture

The street furniture in High Street includes:

- Traffic signals and signs in the form of direction signs at its junctions with other streets and a pedestrian crossing signal near Rob Lane. Considering the busy nature of the A49, there seems to be a good balance of traffic signs in this section of the conservation area, avoiding unnecessary clutter;
- Street lights most of which are painted 'conservation green', in recognition of the conservation area status;



## 6.0 Character Area Analysis

- Street benches on the junction with the Parchment as well outside the public houses of the Pied Bull Hotel and Oak Tree Inn. These are wooden with cast iron supports;
- A number of interpretation boards on Newton's history and development as well as on its Heritage Trail which extends to areas in the Willow Park Conservation Area and beyond. The boards are wooden on metal supports;
- Standard bus shelters in predominantly grey colour, taking into account the area's Conservation Area status, instead of Merseytravel's corporate bright yellow colour scheme;
- Bollards along the street, mainly to restrict pavement parking. They are in metal and painted green. Their extensive use should however be rationalised as too many of them might create clutter, detracting from the character of the area; and,
- One standard telephone box and two historical postal boxes, one outside the High Street post office and another further north;
- A number of litter bins along the street, their design, size and colour considered appropriate in the conservation area.

### A4: Architectural character

High Street displays two main architectural styles: Georgian and Victorian. The (older) Georgian properties make up nearly 15% of all the buildings in the High Street while the Victorian 80%.

On the one hand, the Georgian properties tend to be:

- In detached or semi-detached form.
- Located on the north-eastern side of the street and towards St Peters Church.

On the other, the Victorian properties tend to be:

- In row of terraces.
- Located on the South-western side of the street and towards the Oak Tree Inn end.



## 6.0 Character Area Analysis

Properties of earlier periods and later inter-war developments inter-mingle within these two main styles. The mix of types, sizes and styles creates a character of high quality and great diversity. The resulting visual interest from the combination of this variety within a small area is one of High Street's most enduring architectural qualities.

Despite this variety and diversity however, there are some features, which unify buildings in High Street:

- Predominantly two-storey red brick, some colour washed or rendered on.
- Pitched slate roof with chimneystacks and clay pots, later properties tend to be in concrete tiles.
- Decorative stone and brick features of sills and lintels on windows and doors.
- Timber framed windows in casement or sliding sashes.
- Timber framed front doors with fanlight.
- Brick dentils on the final courses before the eaves level on most front elevations of Victorian properties.

Most of the Georgian properties in High Street are semi-detached or detached and tend to be on the north-eastern side and also near the Church Street end. The Victorian properties are on the western side forming long compact terraces.

There are some key features of the two periods which include properties of earlier periods to these are concentrated on the Crow Lane East/Ashton Road end of the street and tend to be in the form of semi or detached cottages. Though two-storey high, they are modest in external architectural details and smaller in bulk than the other properties in the area.



### A5: Shopfronts

High Street is a thriving commercial street. Of the approximately 113 properties along the street, nearly 50 of them are commercial (32 of which have shopfronts). Shopfronts therefore make a significant contribution to the streetscape of High Street.

Commercial properties are situated in the main between Walmsley and Golborne Streets on the south-western side, and between Rob Lane and the small housing estate known as Rokeden, on the north-eastern side. There is a sequence of service and retail outlets with a mix of traditional and modern shopfronts from numbers 55 to 107 (odd) High Street, all directly fronting the street. The double storey bay window on Jolley's Chemist on number 77 breaks down the continuous frontage, providing a visual punctuation to the streetscape.

#### i) Traditional Shopfronts

As in many other High Streets, many of the commercial properties were not purpose built as shops or offices but evolved from the existing terraced properties; being at the ground floor with living accommodation on the upper floors. Often on two storeys, the narrow plot width creates a strong vertical emphasis, which is an important characteristic of the few remaining Victorian and Edwardian shopfronts in the High Street.

These traditional shopfronts are characterised by the following typical features:

- An ornamental surround with a narrow fascia and deep cornice, side pilasters with corbelled brackets.
- A panelled or rendered stall riser with deep cill beneath the window consisting of profiled glazing bars.
- A recessed entrance door.

In general High Street's shopfronts have not survived well; there only four original shopfronts and windows remaining in the area: numbers 45/47, 63, 87 and 93 High Street. The loss of most of the historic shopfronts makes the survival of the few remaining so much more important.



## 6.0 Character Area Analysis

A summary of the original shopfronts is as follows:

### 45/47 High Street

On the junction with Golborne Street, this shopfront is in timber with a deeply recessed side entrance; typical of Edwardian shopfronts. The fascia is in timber and externally illuminated. Its detailing and location at the intersection of two main streets make it an important streetscape feature in the High Street Conservation Area.



### 63 High Street

The window on number 63 is the only surviving one out of three original shop windows. The other two are on numbers 55 and 61, which have both been unsympathetically altered. This original shop window is in timber with timber pilasters on both flanks and a fascia covered with a miniature leaded roof. Its domestic scale is in keeping with the residential terraces in which it is located. However, the large advertisement sign on top of the window does not respond to this scale and detracts from its appearance.



### 87 High Street

This shopfront is in timber with matching pilasters on both flanks. Built in the Georgian period, it is reputed to be the oldest original shopfront in High Street. The advertisement sign is within the timber fascia, handwritten and not illuminated. Its details and history make it a significant feature in the High Street.

### 93 High Street

This shopfront has typical features of a traditional design. There are two advertisement signs on it, which are considered to have a detrimental impact to the character and visual amenity of the building and the area. The plastic advertisement sign has dominant large letterings and is externally illuminated. A second projecting sign which is above the fascia level, is of a similar design and materials.



### ii) Modern Shopfronts

Modern shopfronts emerged in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century following marked changes to activities in High Street. Due to its location on the busy A49, High Street evolved from a local shopping destination to become one serving a wider area. Large national chains of

firms and shops opened up, resulting in modernisation of traditional shopfronts to accommodate this growth. This is in the form of enlarged shopfronts, larger fascia boards to accommodate advertisement signs amongst other changes, most of which are detrimental to the character of High Street.

Despite these changes, there are still a few examples of well-designed modern shopfronts in the area. These include those in numbers 57/59, 65, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 77, 85, 89, 91, 92, 94 and 96 High Street.

### A6: Key individual buildings

#### Listed buildings

Two out of the six listed buildings in the two conservation areas are located in High Street, all contributing towards the special character of the area. These are:

#### i) 158 & 160 High Street

Dating from 1622, these are two-storey 17<sup>th</sup> Century cottages with 18<sup>th</sup> Century extensions. They have recently been rebuilt and their appearance significantly improved. Originally thatched, their main features include:

- Shallow stone slate roof.
- Colour washed brick on stone base, setback buttresses and coupled gable.
- Timber horizontally sliding sash windows.
- Dormer windows with iron lattice glazing.



Compared to other properties in High Street, they are of a lesser bulk with smaller window openings. As such, they are among the very few remaining examples of buildings of that time in Newton-le-Willows. Together with other similar cottages around this area, they are a reminder of the rural origins of the settlement.

#### ii) The Entrance Archway to the Randall's Nursery

The round-arched entrance archway with flanking wings was originally at Haydock Lodge, outside the conservation area. It is an early 19<sup>th</sup> Century building with the following main features:

- Red sandstone walls.
- Shallow pitched slate roof.
- Arch has impostes and archivolt with scrolly key.
- Typical classical details of:



## 6.0 Character Area Analysis

- A pediment with legh arms and acroterion in the form of a ram's head crest.
- Doric aedicule.
- 4-bay Doric with end bays having rusticated quoins and recesses as well as straight-headed windows.
- Attached colonnade with frieze, with roundels, cornice and blocking course.

Together with the Church of St. Peter this building is among the very few red sandstone buildings in the two conservation areas. Its size and fine architectural features make it a local landmark.

### Unlisted buildings

There are a number of key individual buildings, which contribute to the character of this area. These include:

#### *i) The Pied Bull Hotel*

This is one of the largest public houses on High Street. It is a 1930s building, which has been set back and it replaces the original hotel which was fronting the street. The main features of this two storey detached building include:

- Large, steep half hipped slate roof with raking dormers;
- Double storey bay;
- Paned timber casement windows;
- Prominent two main timber panelled doors, surrounded by timber decorative features; and,
- Spacious forecourt and backyard, both hard landscaped in tarmac.



The open space surrounding this building provides a 'breathing' space in the otherwise compact area of High Street. The backyard is mainly used for car parking but there is an outdoor seating area in the forecourt. Its activities and size make the Pied Bull Hotel an important focal point and local landmark building.

#### *ii) The Oak Tree Inn*

This is the block housing number 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10 Crow Lane East. This block incorporates the historic Oak Tree Inn, reputed to be the oldest public house in the High Street.

This two-storey block of houses directly fronting the road has the following main features:

- Prominent central gable facing the road.
- Conspicuous painted stone quoins.
- Shallow slate roof with stout chimneystacks and clay pots.

## 6.0 Character Area Analysis

- A spacious outdoor seating area.

The prime location of this impressive block at one of the entry points into Newton-le-Willows makes it an important local landmark.

### iii) The Former Magistrates Court (159-171 High Street)

This building was initially built in 1899 as a police station. It then became a magistrate's court until its conversion to a bedroom furniture shop in the late 1980s. It is now residential flats. The building is in excellent condition and its main features include:

- High quality brickwork with sandstone dressing to window and doors.
- A prominent central gable facing the street, in similar materials.
- Pitched slate roof with several impressive stout chimney-stacks and original clay pots.

Its design, fine detailing and scale make it one of the most outstanding buildings in High Street.

### iv) Kirkfield Hotel

The Kirkfield Hotel was originally built in the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century as the Horse and Jockey Public house until the mid 1850s when it became the headquarters for the Newton Division Conservative Association. From 1908 it became the Newton-le-Willows Conservative and Unionist Club and later the Kirkfield Boarding and Day School of which the single storey property on 6 Church Street was part, as a school room.

The main features of this Georgian three-storey building include:

- Pitched slate roof;
- Timber sliding sashes and doors, replaced with uPVC on upper floors. The sashes are small glass panes, with the upper floor windows smaller than the first two and decorative timber features surrounding the doors; and,
- A small front garden with shrubs, bounded by a low brick wall with metal railings.

The architectural quality of this building, its local historical significance and location at the point where Church Street changes direction makes it a highly visible landmark.



### A7: Other Buildings

In addition to the above key individual buildings of local historic and architectural interest, there are other buildings that contribute to the townscape of the two conservation areas.

Kirkby House on 2 High Street, for example, is an elegant two-storey, red brick building of Victorian-Gothic style. Located at the intersection of High Street and Castle Hill, it terminates the buildings on the south-eastern edge of the former street.

The pair of cottages on 24-26 High Street are among the oldest in the area. Originally built around the 17th Century, they still retain their character despite some alterations in the 19th Century with rendering of the walls in stucco in a rusticated stonework effect. Though number 24 has uPVC replacements, number 26 still retains its unusual and elaborate glazing bars.

Other properties include: numbers 51, 61 (The Blue Lion pub), 101, 135-139 High Street and 2-4 Rob Lane, all of which are at the intersection of two main streets in the area.

The location of these buildings at intersections of main streets make them visible from a distance and from more than one direction. Most of them are slightly larger, more ornate and stand out from adjacent buildings, making them visual backstops to groups of buildings.

Also within this character area, are pockets of buildings developed after the main period of construction, which are in architectural features not responding to the character of the area. The main features of such buildings include:

- Detached or semi-detached and set back behind medium-sized hard landscaped forecourts, with none of the low boundary walls associated with properties in the two conservation areas;
- In modern brick of various colours;
- Concrete tiled roof most of them with no chimneys;
- uPVC casement windows and doors;
- No traditional sills or lintels above door and window openings; and,
- uPVC rainwater goods.

Some attempts have been made, as with 1, 3 and 5 Rob Lane, to incorporate traditional features such as chimneys and boundary walls however many of them lack the 'sense of place', which most other parts of the area have.



### A8: Green spaces

High Street is tightly built with hardly any green spaces. Also, it does not have many mature trees, only a few sycamore, lime sp, elm, horse chestnut, alder, ash and cherry. These trees are generally in good condition and contribute considerably to the landscape of the area.

Where they survive, mature trees are vital to the overall quality of the High Street in a number of ways:

- They contribute to making the area a more pleasant and attractive place in which to live and work;
- They provide visual screens and sound barriers, and;
- They add some soft landscaping to the area.

Recently some new trees were planted along High Street. This included a number around car parks along the street and on the corner with the Parchments. This will help to create a broader 'core' of greenery within the High Street area, frame buildings and help to further define the public realm. Once mature they will add diversity to the tree species along the High Street. The new tree species include robinia, dawn redwood, field maple and hawthorn. There are a number of small trees within the front gardens of some properties. These add some softening touches to the street scene.

### A9: Essential character

From the above analysis therefore, the High Street derives its character from the following:

- Mixed-use activities which front the street lends High Street a vibrant feel;**
- Many periods of small-scale development, which almost invariably fronts onto the pavement;**
- A collection of Georgian and Victorian properties of domestic scale;**
- A compact built up area still reflecting the original settlement pattern of narrow footprints and deep plots;**
- Repetition of building frontages with very few breaks in the building line, giving a**



sense of regularity to the streetscape and also providing a pattern and rhythm, which help define this part of the conservation area;

- vi) Key buildings including two listed and several unlisted buildings which provide strong visual stops, landmarks and focal points;
- vii) Lines of trees which define the edges of the road and compliment the building line of the terraces;
- viii) Boundary treatments which add variety: small walled front gardens in some places, whilst the majority of other buildings fronting directly onto the pavement;
- ix) Small details such as low boundary walls, some with railings above, trees, shrubs, and hedges adding softening touches to the street scene.

### **B: Park Road North**

Park Road North runs on a southwest-northeast axis, joining High Street near where it continues as Church Street. Only a section of the street is in the High Street Conservation Area, which begins at the boundary of number 36. This character area also includes a small section of Willow Road as it branches off from Park Road North.

#### **B1: General character**

With only one commercial property (a nursery school at number 31), Park Road North is predominantly residential, characterised by a linear group of 19<sup>th</sup> Century dwellings along the thoroughfare. Away from the busy arterial A49 road, it is a quiet residential area.

Unlike High Street, there appears to be a conscious design in the buildings in Park Road North. Many of the properties are two-storey semi-detached set back behind medium sized front gardens with mature trees and hedges enclosed by low boundary walls.

The small section of Willow Road in this character area consist of a short row of 19<sup>th</sup> Century red terraced properties, set behind much smaller gardens. They are narrower and much smaller than the properties in Park Road North. The rest of Willow Road, which is outside the conservation area, contains modern buildings of a different style and scale detracting from the character of these historic properties.



## 6.0 Character Area Analysis

As Park Road North approaches other streets, the character changes. Where it joins High Street, after Mercer Street there are no front gardens, hedges or trees, creating a harder public realm.

In addition to Willow Road, there are other gaps where space in this character area leaks out into other streets outside the conservation area. Both Birley Street and Mercer Street are to the west of Park Road North and are characterised by long and narrow streets fronted by rows of terraced properties.

Birley Street joins Park Road North between numbers 24 and 26. Properties on numbers 1 to 31 (odd) are similar in design and scale to those along Park Road North, though set behind much smaller front gardens with only shrubs and small hedges. These residential properties have similar features making this short section of Birley Street a visual extension of Park Road North.

On Mercer Street, the terraced properties on the south side are set back from the street by small front gardens while those on the north side, directly front the street. The buildings are narrower and deeper and with no bay windows, making the street more similar to the High Street than Park Road North.

### B2: Public realm audit

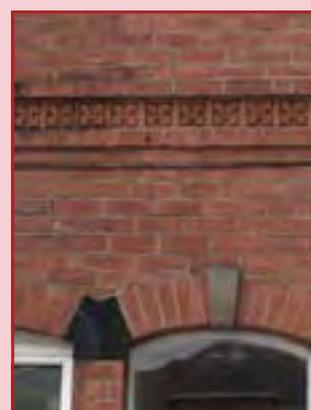
Park Road North tends to have less variety in the public realm than High Street, probably due to its residential character. The following features characterise the public realm in this character area:

#### i) Surface treatment

Both road surface and footpaths are in black bitmac. With the footpaths and road in similar surface treatment, there is lack of variety and visual contrast evident in High Street. This might however present an opportunity for improvement and enhancement.

#### ii) Street furniture

The only notable street furniture in this residential area is the streetlights all in concrete posts, not responding to the character of the area.



### B3: Architectural character

With the exception of number 25 Park Road North, which displays Georgian features, all the other properties in this character area are Victorian with the following typical features:

- Predominately two-storey red brick walls in Flemish bond;
- Pitched slate roof with stout brick chimneystacks, some with original clay pots;
- Timber framed, single storey bay windows;
- Traditional timber sliding sash windows;
- Decorative brick and stone features on doorways and windows including:
  - i. Brick lintels, stone sills;
  - ii. Brick dentil courses at the eaves of main roof and that of bay windows; and,
  - iii. Foliated brick stringcourses across front elevations.
- Timber framed front doors with fanlight and recessed into a small entry porch;
- Decorative brickwork on frontages; and,
- Cast iron rainwater goods;
- Low stone/brick boundary wall with coping, metal railings, stone/brick piers and timber/metal gates.



The single-storey bay windows are in hipped slate roof, red brick surrounds while the sash windows are vertical in emphasis, recessed about a brick's width, creating light and shade to the elevation. Each sash is generally in one single large glass pane, typical of Victorian houses.

In addition to the fanlight and recessed entry porch, many doorways in Park Road North are arched with prominent decorative brick or stone features over them. The recessed entry porches and windows, the projecting bay windows and all the decorative features on the façade create depth and character to these fine Victorian buildings, adding to the distinctiveness of this section of the High Street Conservation Area.

Many of the original front gardens in this area are characterised by low brick walls (about 1.2m high on average) with stone coping, metal railing, brick or stone piers and metal gates. The quiet-

## 6.0 Character Area Analysis

ness and the relationship of the buildings with the gardens, mature trees and street gives Park Road North a suburban feel and transitional area to the busy High Street.

Many of the two storey properties are in pairs of semi-detached residential dwellings set within medium sized plots with mature front gardens and low front walls some with hedges, bestowing a spacious and relaxed quality to this part of the conservation area. The pairing of the semi-detached houses were designed to look like one big house. Together with the highly decorated frontages, this reflects middle class suburban housing that is different from the flat fronts in High Street.

There are variations to this two-storey semi-detached, residential and Victorian style theme and they all add character to the area, which includes:

- Nos. 5-7 Park Road North—a fine pair of semi-detached houses with stuccoed walls, of a late Georgian or Regency character;
- Number 31 Park Road North - a three-storey detached commercial property, currently a nursery school; and,
- The Beeches (numbers 18, 20, 22 and 24 Park Road North) - three-storey terraced properties.

### B4: Listed buildings

There are no listed buildings in Park Road North.

### B5: Unlisted buildings

Most buildings in Park Road North are of high quality; however some of them stand out from the rest:

#### i) 5-7 Park Road North

Originally this pair of semi-detached properties housed staff and were the offices for the Legh Family. Standing out from many of the other properties along Park Road North it has stuccoed walls and is of late Georgian or Regency character.

#### ii) 31 Park Road North

This three-storey detached nursery school is located at the corner with



Willow Road and is set within a large compound with mature trees. Its use as a school and also its size, location and setting make it a focal point as well as a local landmark building.

### iii) The Beeches

These three-storey terraced properties from 18, 20, 22 and 24 Park Road North have similar Victorian features of red brick, slate roof, bay windows, decorative window and door elements as with most of the properties in this area. They have prominent gables facing the street and more finely detailed decorative elements than the rest of the character area. The form, scale and degree of detailing, makes the Beeches stand out in Park Road North.

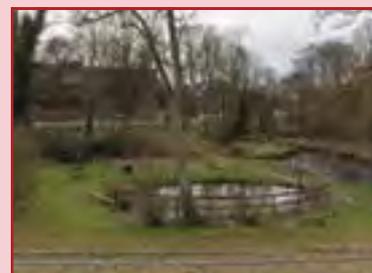
### B6: Green spaces

Most of the green spaces in Park Road North are in the form of medium sized front gardens of sufficient room to support mature trees. Accordingly, there are some excellent mature trees including copper beech, ash, sycamore, silver birch and poplar, most of which are protected by a Tree Preservation Order of 1969. There are other smaller trees including laburnum, cherry, and holly which together with the large ones contribute to the amenity of the area. The tree-lined nature of Park Road North and its relative quietness gives this area a more suburban feel and it is a transition to the busy High Street.

### **B7: Essential character**

**From the above analysis therefore, Park Road North derives its character from the following:**

- i) Residential semi-detached properties in Victorian features of red brick, slate roofing with chimneys and clay pots and decorative brick and stone features whose pattern and rhythm contribute to the distinct character of this area;**
- ii) Key individual unlisted buildings which provide strong visual stops, landmarks and focal points;**
- iii) Low boundary walls, some with railings above, trees, shrubs, and hedges add softening touches to the street scene; and,**



- iv) **The quietness and the relationship of the buildings with the gardens, mature trees and street gives Park Road North a suburban feel.**

### C: Willow Park

This character area consist of a large area of landscape features and groups of buildings, overlapping the two conservation areas:

- Landscape features of Willow Park, Newton Lake and Castle Hill, all within the Willow Park Conservation Area;
- Groups of sparsely scattered buildings within the woodlands of Willow Park; and,
- Group of buildings around the Church of St Peters, all in the High Street Conservation Area.



#### C1: General character

The Willow Park covers over half of this character area, thickly wooded with areas of grassland, meadows and wetland, providing a variety of wildlife habitats. Its size and wooded nature makes it a dominant visual feature in the area.

It also has a 10-kilometre circular walk outlining the history and subsequent development of Newton-le-Willows. As part of the Newton Heritage Trail, it provides an opportunity for people to interact with nature.



The lake abuts the park to the north and together with the surrounding wetland, provides for a variety of aquatic bird and insect life. Together with the park it is an area of high environmental qualities, the main reason that led to its designation as a conservation area.

Located at a lower level, the lake also provides an open space from which the various features of Willow Park could be appreciated, including:

- To the southeastern side, is a steep bank leading to Willow Bank, which is wooded mainly with sycamore, beech, horse chestnut and silver birch, giving a quiet residential feeling. Willow Bank is a small 1930s mews residential development built by Messrs. McCorquodale around the Willow Bank Estate Cul-de-Sac. It consists of 14 semi-detached properties surrounded by woodlands extending from Willow Park;

## 6.0 Character Area Analysis

- To the eastern side, is Mere Road, consisting of Redclyffe House, The Stable, Orchard House, Mere House, Mere Lodge and Highfield as well some more recent dwellings on the east of Mere Road. The grounds of the two villas bordering the lake - Redclyffe House and Mere House - are well-landscaped and thickly wooded, giving a quiet and exclusive residential atmosphere;
- To the west, the lake is bordered by Willow Park which is thickly wooded with tall mature trees. The woodland and the wildlife add a natural feel to the area;
- Beyond the woodlands to the north is open farmland, adding a rural feel to the area.

Surrounded by the landscape features of the park and buildings, the lake offers further interesting panoramic views, making it an equally important feature in the conservation area.

Further north and on the other side of the M6 motorway is Castle Hill, a Scheduled Ancient Monument, adding an archaeological dimension to the character of Willow Park Conservation Area.

The Church, the Vicarage and the Willows are located on the western side of the lake. The Church's tower stands out at the point where the street curves out with one side facing Church Street and another fronting High Street. Visible from most parts of the conservation area, its prominent corner location on elevated land creates an imposing landmark.

Both the Vicarage and the Willows have large mature gardens, complementing the wealth of trees around the church. The mature trees provide a soft landscape to these buildings and help to complement the scale of the church. The cemetery in the churchyard provides it with another setting, as a place for contemplation for the local community and the general public. However, the large car park in the churchyard, which is in tarmac with hardly any soft landscaping, does not provide a suitable setting to the church.

Outside the church along the street, are the Village Stocks, which is a grade II listed structure, contributing to the historical significance of the area.

Mere Road is a narrow rough unadopted byway which has a row of mature trees along it. The road has no footpaths giving a rural feel to the area. To the east of Mere Road are numbers 61, 63 and 65 Southworth Road in similar scale and setting to those in Mere Road.

### C2: Public Realm Audit

The main feature of this character area is the large area containing three varying open spaces of the Willow Park, Newton Lake and Castle Hill. Accordingly, these three landscape features, especially the first two, constitute the most important public realm in this area.

### i) Willow Park

The following are some of the public realm features of the park:

- A network of footpaths, in black bitmac, gravel or untreated;
- Children playing facilities in the form of swings, benches etc and;
- A number of timber interpretation boards on Newton's history and development as well as on its Heritage Trail.

In addition to the plant and wildlife species it supports, the footpaths and children facilities add some recreation value to the park.

### ii) Newton Lake

Around the lake are also a number of timber benches, which are used for relaxation and for fishermen. The dam behind which the lake was formed, is the main public area in the lake. On top of the dam is a bitmac footpath which links Willow Park with Southworth Road. It provides an opportunity from which the public can appreciate the panoramic views of the landscape and buildings beyond the lake. It is also used as a platform from which people feed and enjoy watching the various birds in the lake. These together with the sound of the trees, birds and water flowing down under the dam offers an opportunity to interact with nature.

### iii) Surface treatment

Road surface in this area, including some parts of the park are in black bitmac. Footpath treatment is varied in this area though are not as consciously designed as in the High Street ranging from:

- Traditional stone flags on the street outside the church, responding to the status of the area;
- Black bitmac along most of Southworth Road and Willow Bank Estate, not responding to the status of the area; and,
- Concrete slabs along most of Church Street and parts of Southworth Road, also not responding to the status of the area.

As in other areas with similar inappropriate or unsympathetic surface treatment, the bitmac and concrete slabs might present an opportunity for improvement and enhancement.



### iv) Street furniture

In addition to those in the park and the lake, the other elements of street furniture in this character area include:

- Street lighting which is painted 'conservation green', in keeping with the area's status; and,
- Standard bus shelters in bright yellow corporate colour of Merseytravel, similar to those in High Street.

### C3: Architectural character

Properties in this character area are predominantly Victorian in the form of finely detailed, larger detached residential properties, all set within mature landscaped and heavily treed grounds. Many of these properties display the main Victorian features of red brick, pitched slate roofs, timber sliding sash/casement windows, decorative door and window features of lintels and sills.

However, what makes the properties in Willow Park stand out from the rest of the two conservation areas are their fine architectural details, which include:

- More elaborate chimneystacks with original clay pots.
- Finely modelled stringcourses, which also form the sills to the upper windows, replicated in the eaves/cornice overhangs.
- Crested ridge tiles.
- Dormer windows.
- Timber barge boards.

The layout, scale and degree of detailing of properties in Willow Park reflect the exclusive and much higher historical status of this area. There are slight variations to this theme of large detached houses in spacious compounds. Willow Bank Estate, comprises a group of fourteen buildings, mostly associated with modern architecture of the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century and is characterised by residential, two-storey, semi-detached buildings, in brick and set back in small front gardens with shrubs and hedges with:

- Pitched, mainly concrete tiled roofs, diluting the architectural quality of the area.
- Standard timber doors and casement windows.

With the exception of number 22-24, however, most of the properties in Willow Bank are not of much individual architectural interest. Rather, it is their historic association with Messrs. McCorquodale and the wooded nature of the area, making them an extension of Willow Park, that these properties were included in the Willow Park Conservation Area.

### C4: Listed buildings

There are two listed buildings in this character area, which both belong to the other Conservation Area of High Street:

#### i) The Church of St Peter

Built between 1892 and 1901, the church is in red sandstone, pitched slate roof, single vessel nave and chancel, lean-to aisles, embattled parapet and west tower with north and south porches. The tower also has west entrance with a 5-light window, paired straight-headed bell opening with tracery heads. Chancel has 7-light east window flanked by casping buttresses.

Its size, height and function as a church make it:

- Visible from many places within the two conservation areas making it a landmark building; and,
- Its church function makes it, in addition, an important focal point in High Street Conservation Area.

Together with the Vicarage and the Willows, they form a significant group of large buildings whose size, architectural qualities and setting make an important contribution to the overall character of the two conservation areas.

#### ii) The Village Stocks

These Village Stocks are located outside the Church of St Peter along Church Street. They were built in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century as a form of punishment for the likes of dishonest tradesmen and drunkards, among other petty offenders. The last known official use of these Stocks was in 1859.

The Stocks are in the form of two stone piers with shaped heads and grooves to take wooden boards. As a feature of an earlier form of community punishment, the Village Stocks are a physical reminder of the social history of the area.

### C5: Unlisted buildings

With the exception of the semi-detached properties in Willow Bank, many of the groups of buildings within this character area are of outstanding architectural quality. Their size, setting and fine detailing make them important assets in the conservation area.



### C6: Green spaces

The wooded nature of these green spaces make Willow Park an area of high environmental qualities. The following are some of the varying open spaces which constitute the large area of Willow Park:

#### i) St Peter's Church

The mature trees around St Peter's Church help to link the church into the wider landscape of Willow Park. The trees include horse chestnuts, beech, sycamore and lime.

#### ii) Mere Road

On either side of Mere Road are houses with large mature gardens containing a variety of trees including sycamore, horse chestnut, lime sp, beech, copper beech, cypress sp and holly. The road itself has a line of mature trees along it including sycamore, lime sp, sweet chestnut, horse chestnut and Indian horse chestnut. The area around the lake has a sycamore woodland, which embraces the area around St. Peters Church and fringes the dam area and farmland area to the north.

#### iii) Newton Brook Greenway

The area of woodland between Park Road North and A49 is part of the Newton Brook Greenway. Crack willows and alder dominate the lower parts of the wood close to the brook and an under storey of Himalayan balsam. The higher areas are drier and contain mature sycamores, common oak, yew, horse chestnut, wych elm and ash. The railway embankment is covered with mature naturally regenerated sycamore woodland and provides a green backdrop to the woodland area. Closer to the dam and the open areas of the park there is a wider range of tree species including: beech, Corsican pine, sweet chestnut, Norway maple, whitebeam, ash, hawthorn, holly and yew. There is some rhododendron within the under storey.

#### iv) Willow Bank

The parkland around the dam fronts onto the Southworth Road and Willow Bank Estate. The road is lined with a row of sycamore trees on the east side with a steep bank leading up to Willow Bank. This bank is wooded containing mature sycamore with some beech, horse chestnut and silver birch.

#### v) Open farmland

Further north along the dam edge there are crack and white willows, with the areas of the dam that are silting up now being covered by willows. Sycamore, silver birch and elder are also present along the edge of the farmland. To the north of the M6 motorway, the brook here is lined with extensive areas of Himalayan balsam with the occasional goat and crack willow along the edge. The area to the east of the brook is steeply sloping but contains mature sycamore and

beech that help to create attractive views of the area around the brook. The mound area is covered with naturally regenerated common oak, hawthorn and silver birch with the more open grass areas containing common spotted orchids.

### **C7: Essential character**

Willow Park derives its character from:

#### **a) The heavily wooded Willow Park:**

- i. tall mature trees and the variety of wildlife habitats it supports gives the area a quiet and natural atmosphere; and,
- ii. a network of footpaths within provide an opportunity for recreation and interaction with nature



#### **b) The Newton Lake:**

- i. the central location of this large open space and its lower level, offers panoramic views of surrounding landscape features and buildings;
- ii. the sound of the birds in the lake and water flowing under the dam adds to the natural atmosphere of the area; and,
- iii. the closeness of the birds with passing people offers yet another opportunity to interact with nature.



#### **c) The group of buildings within:**

- i. are sparsely scattered giving the area a low density
- ii. their scale, setting and degree of detailing give the area an exclusively high status.



### **D: Newton Station and Legh Arms**

This character area consists of a group of historic buildings around the Liverpool to Manchester Railway line. These include:

- Newton Station.
- Mill Lane Viaduct.
- Legh Terrace.
- Legh Arms Hotel; and,
- Terraced properties on Southworth Road to the east of Legh Arms.

### D1: General character

Located along Mill Lane, part of the arterial road of the A49, this is a mixed use character area, which includes a railway station, a hotel, a service station and residential properties.

Newton station is a Grade II listed 19<sup>th</sup> century two-storey building on elevated ground. The platforms side is single storey. It has a medium sized forecourt partly hard landscaped in tarmac with mature trees and shrubs. Vehicular access to the station is through a steep cobbled road from Southworth Road. A pedestrian access from Mill Lane to the station is by a flight of steps.

To the west of the station is the Grade II listed Newton Viaduct. Its four arches make it a gateway feature into the Willow Park Conservation Area. To the north, the station overlooks a 19<sup>th</sup> Century terrace (Legh Terrace), set behind small landscaped gardens. Further north of the station is the Legh Arms Hotel located at the intersection of three main streets of Southworth Road, Church Street and Mill Lane, making it visible from many directions and it is a landmark building in the Willow Park Conservation Area. To the north-east of the Legh Arms on Southworth Road, is another set of 19<sup>th</sup> Century terraced properties.

There is a variation to the character derived from this group of historical buildings. The Mill Bridge Terrace, a recent infill development and the service station to the west of Mill Lane are modern buildings in a style, layout and material which do not respond to this character.

### D2: Public realm audit

#### i) Surface treatment

Together with High Street this is one of the few areas with a variety of road surface treatment:

- Cobbles on the forecourt of the Legh Arms, retaining the historic character of the area;
- Cobbles/black bitmac on parts of Newton Station forecourt as well as the stretch of road leading to it;
- Stone flags on the stretch of footpath between Legh Arms and Legh Terrace; and,
- Black bitmac on the rest of the roads and footpaths in the area; and,



### ii) Street furniture

The street furniture in High Street includes:

- Street lights most of which are painted ‘conservation green’, in recognition of the conservation area status;
- A number of notice boards on the railway station for train timetables. Unfortunately some of these obscure some important architectural features on this Grade II listed building.

### D3: Architectural character

The group of properties in this character area are all dated from the Victorian Period. However, they vary in style and scale, for example:

#### i) Train Station

The grade II listed station is a 19<sup>th</sup> century brick two-storey detached building in red brick with sandstone dressings around timber doors and casement windows, pitched slate roof and several chimneystacks with original clay pots.



#### ii) Legh Terrace

Another 19<sup>th</sup> Century two-storey property, in rustic brick and set behind small landscaped gardens. It also has the typical Victorian features of bay windows, a prominent doorway and window decorative elements as well as chimneystacks with pots. The terrace on Southworth Road is less elaborately detailed and fronts directly onto the street.



#### iii) Legh Arms

A large detached hotel building characterised by:

- A square layout and symmetrical elevations.
- Prominent and finely detailed central main door.
- Multi-chimneystacks with clay pots.
- Hipped slate roof.
- Wooden sash windows.



## 6.0 Character Area Analysis

- Stone dressing surrounding doors and window; and,
- Conspicuous stone quoins.

Though the hotel was built in the Victorian period, its layout, roof shape, symmetry and detailing suggest Georgian influence.

### iv) Newton Viaduct

The Grade II listed four-arched Newton Viaduct to the west of the station is one of the original railway bridges over roads on the Liverpool-Manchester line. Its four arches are in red brick with stone dressing and rusticated voussoirs, typical of original railway bridges, which make it a gateway feature in the Willow Park Conservation Area.

### D4: Listed buildings

There are two listed buildings in this character area, all connected to the historic Liverpool-Manchester railway:

### i) Newton Station

Built in the 1840s, this station building is grade II listed. It is a two-storey six-bay building with a booking office on the ground floor and waiting rooms on the first floor. It is in red brick with stone dressings. The first three bays are recessed with a 20<sup>th</sup> Century canopy, the third bay has a re-entrant porch with parapet and entrances to return fourth bay gabled. The fourth up to sixth bays have a ground floor of rock-faced stone. The ground floor has mullioned windows and those to third and fourth bays with high transoms.

### ii) Newton Viaduct

Newton Viaduct is also grade II listed. It was one of the original viaducts on the Liverpool - Manchester railway built in 1828. Over the arches is a brick parapet with stone pilasters and coping; rusticated stone piers terminate curved retaining walls at the end. To the west of the arches is a low elliptical arch forming a tunnel for a stream. Essentially, the Viaduct is a gateway feature into Willow Park Conservation Area and Newton-le-Willows, in general.

### D5: Unlisted buildings

Located at the intersection of three main streets, Legh Arms is the most conspicuous building in this character area. Its activities, location, size and fine architectural details make it a focal point and a local landmark building.



### D6: Green Space

The only significant green space in this area is between the station building and the viaduct, contained by a retaining wall on the Mill Lane side. It is a small area with shrubs, providing an immediate setting to the station building from the Mill Lane approach.



### D7: Essential character

This area derives its character mainly from:

- **The grouping of historical buildings and structures within a small area;**
- **The mixed use activities giving the area a vibrant atmosphere; and**
- **The change in levels and materials – rustic brick, cobbles and stone flags among others – add to the quality of the area.**



6.0 Character Area Analysis



# 7.0 Distinctive Features and Local Detail

## 7.0 Distinctive details and local features

From the character analysis, there are a variety of architectural details and local features that give the two conservation areas a sense of local distinctiveness. Individually and collectively they contribute to the overall quality of both the High Street and Willow Park Conservation Areas' streetscape as well as enhancing individual character areas within them.

### 7.1 Boundary walls

Boundary walls in varying heights and materials are a common feature in many parts, contributing significantly to the character of the two conservation areas. They add interest and variety of scale in the street scene and provide a sense of enclosure, separating spaces of differing character and often marking the boundaries between public and private spaces.

The boundary walls are predominantly in red brick. It is only in the Church of St Peter and the Archway that red sandstone has been used. The majority occur in Park Road North and some parts of High Street, Mere Road and Willow Bank Estate.

Many of them are a maximum of 600 mm high with stone coping and a metal railing to a total height of about 900mm to 1200mm. Some of them also have metal gates on brick piers. The boundary walls on the newer properties in Mere Road tend to be higher, over 1500mm high and in modern bricks.

Providing a strong edge to properties, these boundary walls with their associated elements of railings and entranceways are important features in the area.

### 7.2 Window sills and lintels

Another striking feature of the two conservation areas is the variety of sills and lintels around windows. Some are in brick in various decorative patterns, others in sandstone, some are wedged, while some are arched. As one of the most visible elements of the building they make an important contribution to the distinctiveness of the two conservation areas.



## 7.0 Distinctive Features and Local Detail

### 7.3 Gardens, trees and hedges

There are many properties in the area with well-maintained mature front gardens. Such features help to define the distinctiveness of the area around Park Road North, Church Street, Willow Bank Estate, Mere Road and to some extent, parts of High Street. They also add some softening touches to the buildings.

### 7.4 Chimneys and chimney pots

With most buildings pre-dating central heating, many retain their original chimneystacks and pots. Although not particularly tall or ornate, they are nevertheless locally distinctive features, which make a significant contribution to the skyline of the two conservation areas, particularly that of High Street.

### 7.5 Traditional timber windows and doors

Windows in most properties in the conservation area follow the typical Georgian and Victorian hierarchies. The Georgian windows are in timber sliding sash with nine or twelve panes in each with the windows nearer the roof being smaller than the rest. The Victorian windows are either timber casement or sliding sash with one large glass pane on each casement or sash. They are always recessed, which together with the elaborate sills and lintels, create an elevation that has a variety of form.

Bay windows in timber or brick surround and timber sliding sash or casement are another distinctive element of the Victorian houses in the two conservation areas. In most cases they are single storey, individually covered with a hipped slate roof. Many of them have decorative brickwork at the eaves level.

Many of the Victorian doors in Park Road North are set within a semi-circular brick archway. Few traditional handles and doorknockers have survived and there is no consistency across the conservation area. The original doors would have had a central doorknob below the middle panels and a decorative knocker placed higher.



### 7.6 Traditional shopfronts

Traditional as well as well-designed non-original shopfronts can make a significant contribution to the character and appearance of an area. Traditional shopfronts in this area are mainly from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and comprise the typical features of timber stall risers, pilasters, capitals consoles and fascia boards with well-proportioned advertisement signs. Some of the modern shopfronts also respect these original features, materials and scale.

### 7.7 Date plaques

There are several commemorative date plaques in front of properties in the conservation area. They provide important information about the building's date and occasionally the architect or developer and are features worthy of retention.

### 7.8 Wall brackets

Most properties along High Street have metal brackets on the front elevation. Though many shops hang flags on these brackets, they are mainly used for holding Christmas trees. As they contribute towards the local character and setting of the area, they are also features worthy of retention.



# 8.0 Extent of Loss, Intrusion or Damage

## 8.0 Extent of loss, intrusion or damage to character

From the character analysis, it is evident that the two conservation areas contain fine buildings and spaces of significant architectural and historic interest, which together contribute to their special respective designation. However, there are a number of issues that have detrimental impact on their character. Such issues fall under the following broad categories:

- Inappropriate new development;
- Unsympathetic alterations;
- Negative sites and spaces;
- Satellite dishes and TV antennae;
- Loss of mature trees; and,
- Heavy traffic.

If acted upon however, such negative features could also present an opportunity for change and enhancement.

### 8.1 Inappropriate new development

The High Street Conservation Area has been described as an extension through many generations of small-scale development, in Georgian and Victorian features, which almost invariably fronts onto the pavement. The main features of the Willow Park Conservation Area on the other hand have been identified as the large wooded area of varied open space containing within it sparsely scattered groups of large buildings set within equally large mature gardens.

Accordingly, any development that departs from these general characterisations could be considered to detract from the overall character of the respective conservation areas within which it is located.

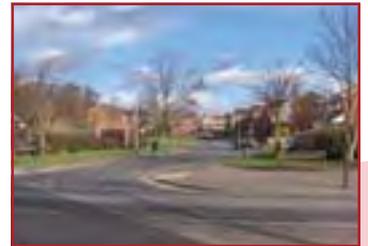


## 8.0 Extent of Loss, Intrusion or Damage

### A: High Street Conservation Area

Though opportunities for new development in the High Street Conservation Area are limited, a number of new properties have been built most of which are not considered to be in keeping with the character of the Area. These includes properties in the areas of Rob Lane, Rokeden, the Parchments, Ashton Road and Dale View;

All these have features that fail to respond to the character of the area in terms of layout and design. With the exception of the terraced properties on Dale View, most of these late 20<sup>th</sup> Century developments are in semi or detached form set behind hard landscaped forecourts. Burgage plots have been cut across creating large blocks for these new buildings, impinging on the smaller, more domestic scale of the historic layout. This has resulted in the loss of the historic grain of this medieval village.



In addition, these new modern buildings are characterised by:

- Concrete tiles which are not considered traditional roofing material;
- Very few, if any, have the traditional chimneystacks and clay pots evident in the two conservation areas;
- uPVC windows and doors in scale and proportions, not in keeping with the character of the area; and,
- Lack of traditional door and window features of sills and lintels; where incorporated these are in concrete instead of sandstone or brick.



These modern materials and features have eroded the character of the area.

Smaller infill developments have also adversely affected the setting and character of this area. These include:

- i) The development at the junction of Park Road North and High Street, the site of the historic Assembly Rooms and former Newton Town Hall;
- ii) National Autocare Centre (20-22 High Street); and,
- iii) 151-157 (odd) High Street.

## 8.0 Extent of Loss, Intrusion or Damage

They are all in modern materials, failing to reinforce the character of the area. (ii) and (iii) are also in a layout and setting which is not in keeping with the compact nature and continuous frontage characteristic of the area.

### B: Willow Park Conservation Area

The most significant new development in this area is Millbridge Gardens near the Mill Lane Viaduct. Set behind a large forecourt in tarmac, this is in the form of a three-storey block of residential flats, in modern materials and features. Again, the layout and materials do not respond to the general character of Willow Park Conservation Area. Accordingly, this late 20<sup>th</sup> Century development detracts from the character of the area.

## 8.2 Unsympathetic alterations

The biggest threat to the character and appearance of both the conservation areas appears to be minor, incremental changes to the houses. Over the years, many occupants of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century properties in the two areas have sought to “personalise” them through the following, which have eroded the character and visual cohesion of groups of buildings:

### i) Wall treatment

There are examples of part or whole front elevations of properties having been painted or clad in inappropriate colours and/or materials. As all of the houses are either part of a terrace of similar houses, or half of a pair of matching semi-detached houses, such alterations to the appearance of one property has an adverse impact on the group. This could seriously affect the overall appearance of the houses.

### ii) Shopfronts and inappropriate signs

Due to its accessibility, High Street has evolved from a local shopping area to become an area with many retail outlets, offices and service sector uses serving people beyond Newton-le-Willows. Shopfronts in High Street are most affected with many of them altered to reflect these fashions and corporate needs.

Examples of negative features, many of which have had cumulative detrimental impact on the architectural integrity of individual buildings and the character of the conservation area as a whole, include:

- Widened historic shopfronts to adapt to larger convenient stores such as the SPAR at 105 High Street;
- Oversized and inappropriate signage and illumination: Traditional advertisement signs have been in sign-written timber painted using rich, dark colours for back-

## 8.0 Extent of Loss, Intrusion or Damage

ground and light colours for the lettering;

- External solid metal roller shutters; an inappropriate and unsympathetic feature in the street scene. Roller shutters in conservation areas should be internal and latticed.



### iii) Use of inappropriate materials

The use of materials sympathetic to the area for any new development or alterations is an important way of preserving the area's unique character. In addition to timber, the other predominant (traditional) building materials in the conservation area are red brick in lime mortar and slate. Examples of inappropriate materials in the Conservation Areas include:

- Use of modern bricks, in uncharacteristic colours, sizes and texture;
- Use of hard cement mortars for re-pointing of brickwork; and,
- The replacement of original features, such as timber windows or doors, with other materials, such as aluminium or uPVC.



All these have had detrimental effect on the character of both conservation areas.



### 8.3 Negative sites and spaces

These are generally areas not being used to their full potential and in the process wasting space that is at a premium in the conservation areas. Some of these areas are in the form of undeveloped sites, which if built upon or landscaped could contribute to the surrounding area. Examples of negative sites and spaces include:

#### i) Open space adjacent to number 10 Park Road North

This is the open space on the left side of Park Road North as it approaches High Street. It has been vacant for a while now, to the detriment of the character of the conservation area.

## 8.0 Extent of Loss, Intrusion or Damage

### ii) 20-22 High Street The National Tyre and Auto Care

This a large building spanning over the width of about three plot sizes of an average building in the area. It is a high, single storey garage structure in asbestos roof and oversized advertisement signs. It is in a design, scale and massing that is not in keeping either with the character of the area.



### iii) Newton-le-Willows Conservative Union Club

The aluminium industrial type chimney visible from the High Street and the protective metal grills on the windows are not considered appropriate in the conservation area.



## 8.4 Satellite dishes and TV antennae

Roofscapes are often subject to extensive additions of plant, antennae and satellite dishes. In a number of locations throughout the conservation area, roof clutter such as inappropriately sited aerials, telecommunications equipment and satellite dishes affecting short and long distance views. This has become visually obtrusive, impacting on the area's special character.



## 8.5 Loss of Mature Trees

Mature trees are major features of the two conservation areas in Newton-le-Willows, especially the Willow Park and any loss would be detrimental to their character. Trees and green spaces are vital to the quality of urban environments in both visual and environmental terms. They contribute significantly to the character and appearance of conservation areas and the local townscape, providing a soft edge within buildings.

## 8.0 Extent of Loss, Intrusion or Damage

Several factors have led to the removal of trees in the two conservation areas including:

- Natural causes like disease.
- The weather.
- Development pressures.

Though efforts have been made to plant new trees, most of them are still small and fail to provide the scale, shelter or natural habitat of the large trees.

### 8.6 Loss of front gardens and boundary treatment

Most front gardens and boundary walls within the conservation area have been retained although a number have been seriously altered. The two main problems have been:

- Paving of front gardens and removal of hedges and shrubs;
- Removal of front boundary walls/hedges to allow for car parking on front hard-standing.

All this has led to a cumulative loss an important local detail, eroding the character of the area.

# 9.0 Community Involvement

## 9.0 Community Involvement

It is important that property owners accept their maintenance responsibilities. As they contribute to the conservation area as a whole, the emphasis should be on repair rather than replacement of original features. Alterations or additions should be sympathetic to the original style and be of an appropriate scale.

The Council is committed to meaningful community involvement in the process of reviewing the two conservation areas in Newton-le-Willows. A comprehensive consultation will take place during the review and feedback from residents, businesses and the voluntary sector will be taken into account in developing recommendations for the improvement of the areas. The Statement of Community Involvement for Local Development Framework sets out the consultation considered appropriate in relation to planning for the Borough. That statement will guide this consultation process.



# 10.0 Boundary Changes

## 10.0 Boundary Changes

As part of this character appraisal, the Council is required to review the boundaries of the conservation areas. Under section 69, The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 imposes a duty on the local planning authority from time to time to review the designated Conservation Areas.

*“It shall be the duty of a Local Planning Authority from time to time to review ..... and to determine whether any parts or any further parts of their area should be designated as Conservation Areas; and if they so determine, they shall designate those parts accordingly”*



This review of the boundaries of the Conservation Areas appraisal is in fulfilment of this other statutory requirement.

The boundary of the High Street Conservation Area has been drawn to include the historic core of Newton-le-Willows and encompass almost all of the village’s pre-1920 buildings with significant examples of architecture and buildings from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Willow Park Conservation Area, on the other hand, draws areas of environmental quality surrounding the historical core.



The main issue to consider in the boundary review, therefore, is whether the area under consideration has the same “demonstrably special architectural and historic interest” as the main parts of the conservation area, thereby indicating that the character and appearance should be preserved or enhanced

## 10.1 Criteria

Taking into the account the essential qualities of the two conservation areas the following will be critically reviewed in the proposed amendment of the present boundaries:

- Boundary.
- Architectural quality and historical significance; and,
- Townscape quality.

The issues to be considered are in three broad categories:

Criteria		Feature	
a	<b>Boundary</b>	i	Is there a clearly defined edge to the existing boundary with definite change in character and quality?
		ii	Is there an area clearly meeting the defined criteria which lies outside such an edge?
b	<b>Architectural quality and historic significance</b>	i	Is the area of similar demonstrable special architectural or historic interest as the rest of the conservation area?
		ii	Does the development within the area date from a similar period to substantial parts of the conservation area?
		iii	Do the uses within the area reflect prevailing or former uses of substantial parts of the conservation area?
		iv	Is the development the work of the same architect/developer active elsewhere within significant parts of the conservation area?
		v	Is it of similar massing bulk height and scale to a significant portion of the development within the conservation area?
		vi	Is it within the area is of notable architectural and historic interest in its own right necessitating a separate designation?
c	<b>Townscape quality</b>	i	What proportion of the buildings within the area would be defined as positive contributors if located in the conservation area?
		ii	Is there is evidence of significant alteration to the area as a result of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alterations and extensions?</li> <li>• Alterations to roofs?</li> <li>• The loss of original details (doors, windows or chimneys) or re-facing of brickwork?</li> </ul>

In general, it is considered the existing boundaries continue to include areas of special architectural and/or historic interest and that most of the properties should be retained within the Conservation Area. However there are some few sections in and out of the designated areas, which need to be reviewed.

### 10.2 Proposed amendments

#### Areas recommended for exclusion

The following properties in High Street Conservation Area are relatively new developments built in the 1980s or 1990s as infill development or on undeveloped sites:

- Nos. 1-5 (odd) Ashton Road;
- Nos. 4-6 (even) The Parchments.

The layout and design of these developments fail to respond to the character of the area. There is a definite change of character and quality between these three areas with the rest of the conservation area. Accordingly, it is being recommended that they should be excluded from the High Street Conservation Area, under criteria a (i), b (iv) and c (i) above.

There are other similar relatively new properties within the conservation area, which also detract from the character of the area. These include:

- Nos. 1-4 Rokeden
- Nos. 1, 3, 3a, 3b, 3c, 27, 29, 29a and 151-157 (odd) High Street;
- Nos. 1 and 3 Park Road North; and,
- Mill Bridge Gardens.

Most of these are infill developments some built as recent as in the 2000s. Ignoring local architectural style and traditional materials, little regard was given to the historical context of the area. Though they also undermine the character of the conservation area, their location in the core of the conservation area makes their exclusion impracticable and they should be retained.



There are also relatively new developments in Willow Park Conservation Area. Willow Bank Estate and development to the north of Mere Road are good examples. These however still respect the historic context of the area in terms of scale, layout and design, and are worth retaining in the conservation area under criteria b (iv).

### Areas recommended for inclusion

There are some adjacent areas that could be considered to be associated with the two Conservation Areas by virtue of their history and architecture. Such areas include:

- 1-31(odd) 2, 4, 6 Birley Street including St Peters C of E School
- 1, 3, 45-165(odd) and 2-10, 16-26a, 28-42, 56, 68, 92-122, 132-142 Mercer Street
- 1, 1a and 12-26 Golborne Street.
- 13-39(odd) Crow Lane East
- 69, 69a, 71, 71a-87(odd) Southworth Road

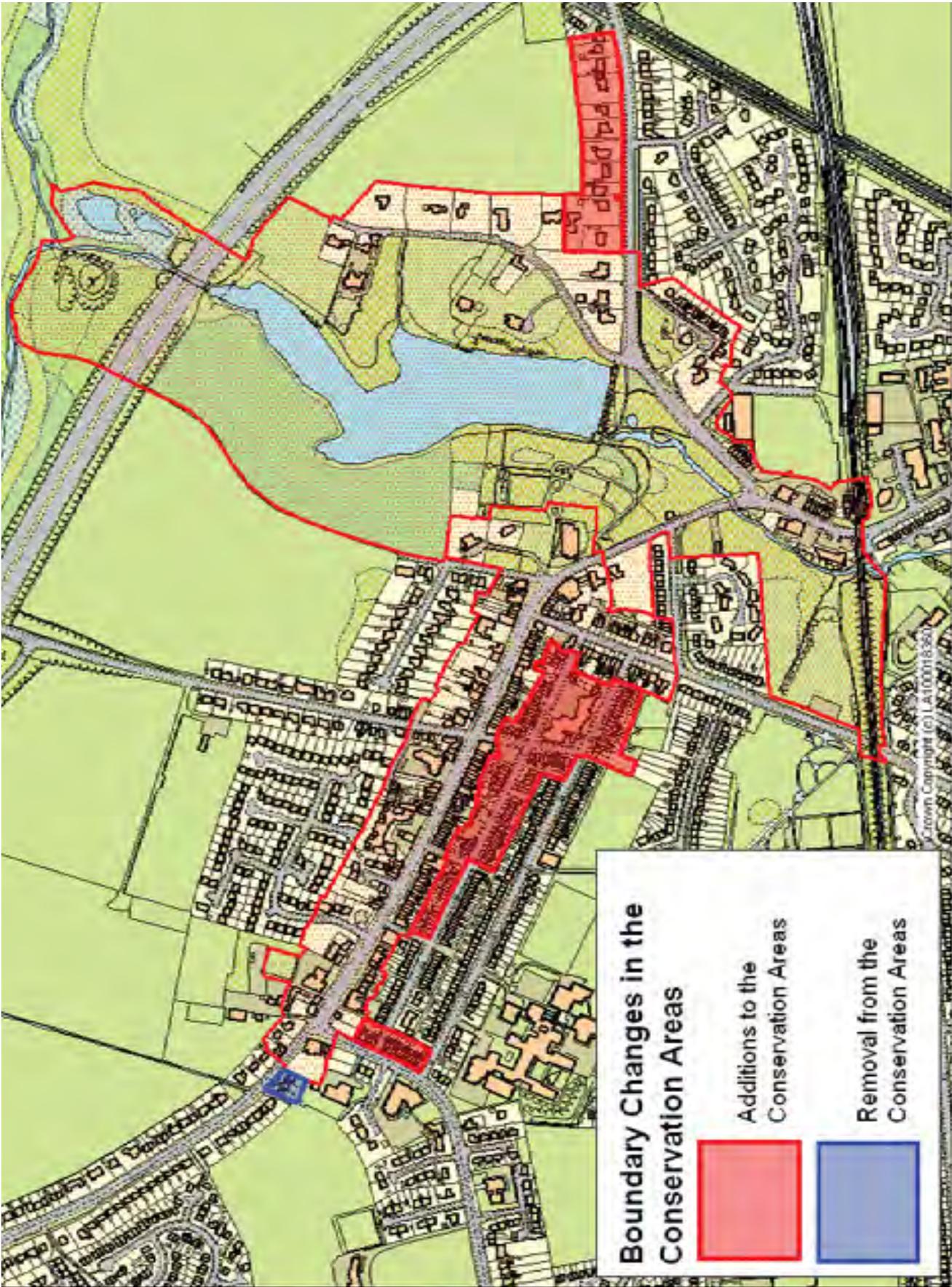


Though of a slightly later date, historical maps show that by the late 19th century many of the properties in the first four areas above had already been built. They are still predominantly residential and many of them have retained their Victorian features and historical terrace.

Accordingly, areas 1, 2, 3 and 4 above should be considered for inclusion into High Street Conservation Area. This inclusion is in line with the set criteria a (ii), b (i), (ii), (iii), (v) and c (i), (ii).

Unfortunately many properties in these areas are not in good condition, and doors and windows are being replaced with ones of not the same proportions and materials. Their inclusion should be seen as an enhancement opportunity and therefore subject to availability of funds for the reinstatement of loss of important architectural features.

Historical maps also show that some properties along Southworth Road, built even earlier than properties of in Willow Park Conservation Area were excluded in the original designation. Area 5 above is characterised by large detached properties set behind equally large, well landscaped gardens with mature trees. They are in materials and similar Victorian features to those on the eastern side of Mere Road. Accordingly, it is recommended that the boundary of Willow Park Conservation Area should be amended to include 69-87 (odd) Southworth Road. This inclusion is in line with the same criteria as above.



# 11.0 Summary of Key Character

## 11.0 Summary of key character

The special architectural and historic interest of the two Newton-le-Willows Conservation Areas derives from a number of architectural, historic and environmental factors including:

- **The village's historic street pattern and layout;**
- **The area's rural setting and tranquil atmosphere;**
- **The predominance of St. Peter's Church which holds a prominent position in the village and is a local landmark;**
- **The architectural and historic interest of the area's buildings, six of which are listed;**
- **The prevalent use of traditional building materials, notably red brick, Welsh slate, timber and cast iron;**
- **Large open space including man-made landscape features of Willow Park, Castle Hill and the Newton Lake;**
- **The area's trees and other vegetation particularly where this bounds a road or footpath;**
- **Distinctive local features and details, including brick boundary walls, window sills and lintels, bay windows, timber sash windows and brick chimney stacks amongst others, that give the area its special identity.**

These are the key characteristics, which give these two areas their special character. They should be a material consideration when deciding on any development in the two Conservation Areas.



# 12.0 Issues

## 12.0 Issues

In general, the quality of the two designated areas and the listed buildings within was found to be of satisfactory condition. Within them however, particularly in the High Street Conservation Area, there are number of threats to its character, which are summarised in Chapter 8 of this report.

## 12.1 Issues To Be Tackled Through Planning Control

Many of the issues identified in the appraisal will hopefully be tackled through the normal Council's planning control measures. Article 4 Direction has been in operation in Newton-le-Willows since 1982 but there is still evidence of an increased number of uPVC doors and windows contrary to the Direction.

### New developments

A conservation area is not a museum but an area, which changes over time. New development within the Conservation Area is therefore expected. However, any changes that occur should do so in a way as to encourage the retention or enhancement of the existing appearance of the area. The opportunities for new development in Newton-le-Willows are limited but the impact on any changes on the traditional form and character of the designated areas has to be carefully considered before Conservation Area Consent or planning permission is granted. In addition, any development should not detract from the setting of the historic area.

### Use of inappropriate materials

The use of materials sympathetic to the area for any new development or alterations is an important way of preserving the area's unique character. In addition to timber, the other predominant (traditional) building materials in the conservation area are red brick and slate. Again, effective enforcement measures should be taken to arrest this problem.

### Negative spaces

There are a number of sections in the conservation areas, which are not being used to their full potential. In their redevelopment, the impact on the character of the Conservation Area should be carefully considered before planning permission is granted. Any development should not detract from the character of the conservation area.

### Loss of mature trees

Mature trees are major features of the two conservation areas in Newton-le-Willows, especially Willow Park and any loss would be detrimental to the character of the area. Several factors have led to the reduction of trees in the two conservation areas. Though a significant

number of trees have been lost to natural causes like disease and the weather, various development pressures have claimed a significant amount. Gradual renewal of trees should be designed to preserve scale and variety.

### Traffic impact

The High Street has always been known for its tree-lined appearance. Until recently the road was broad and lined with mature trees but it has been reduced to provide for on-street car parking on both sides. Mature trees provide a buffer between the road and the buildings alongside protection against pollution and noise.

## **12.2 Issues requiring attention from the Local Authority and its partner agencies**

### Public realm and environmental maintenance

Most footpaths in High Street and Church Street are in concrete paving slabs and setts. The use of different surface materials between the road and the footpaths creates visual contrast in the public realm and contributes to the quality of the conservation area. However, there are many parts of the conservation area where both the road and footpaths are in bitmac. The Highway Section should look into upgrading the footpaths in the conservation areas in their annual maintenance workload.

### On street commuter parking

There are many cars parked on the street, especially in Southworth Road during weekdays, for commuters to Liverpool and Manchester from Newton-le-Willows train station. On-street commuter parking can be a problem especially if there are no restrictions in place. St. Helens Council should work with Merseytravel to provide for a Park and Ride scheme.

### 12.3 Issues that need to be addressed through statutory action taken by the Local Authority

#### Alterations

The cumulative loss of local details and features is a major concern in a conservation area. Inappropriate and insensitive alterations to window and door openings, shopfronts, loss of natural slate roof coverings, replacement of wood windows and cast iron rainwater goods with uPVC materials, rendering of chimney stacks and removal of chimney pots all lead to the erosion and loss of the historic fabric. This process of change directly affects the character and appearance of the buildings in this section of Newton-le-Willows and in turn the special interest of the conservation areas.

Most of the alterations could be addressed through stricter enforcement of the existing Article 4 Direction or re-issuing an up-to-date Article 4 Direction. In addition, the Council should produce an Supplementary Planning Document on shopfronts to advise on all commercial properties in the Borough and in particular conservation areas.

# 13.0 Next Steps

## 13.1 Adoption Procedures

Once consultation has been completed and the appraisal revised to take account of public responses, it will need to be adopted formally through St. Helen Council's internal procedures.

## 13.2 Developing Management Proposals

The recommendations in this appraisal will provide the basis for developing and publishing management proposals for the area.

## 13.3 Monitoring

To deal with any issues, changes in the appearance and condition of the conservation area need to be monitored regularly and appropriate action taken promptly. A dated photographic record of the area has been produced during the appraisal process, as this will provide an invaluable aid to any later enforcement action.

## 13.4 Review And Updating

Conservation area appraisals need to be reviewed and updated on a regular basis. Ideally this review process should take place every five years.

The character and appearance of most conservation areas and the special interest that warrants this designation generally does not change that rapidly although the related management proposals will need to be reviewed and updated. Rather than requiring wholesale rewriting, the five yearly reviews might result in an addendum to an existing appraisal, recording what has changed, redefining (or confirming) the special interest that warrants designation and setting out any new recommendations. The updated appraisal then needs to be re-adopted by the Council.

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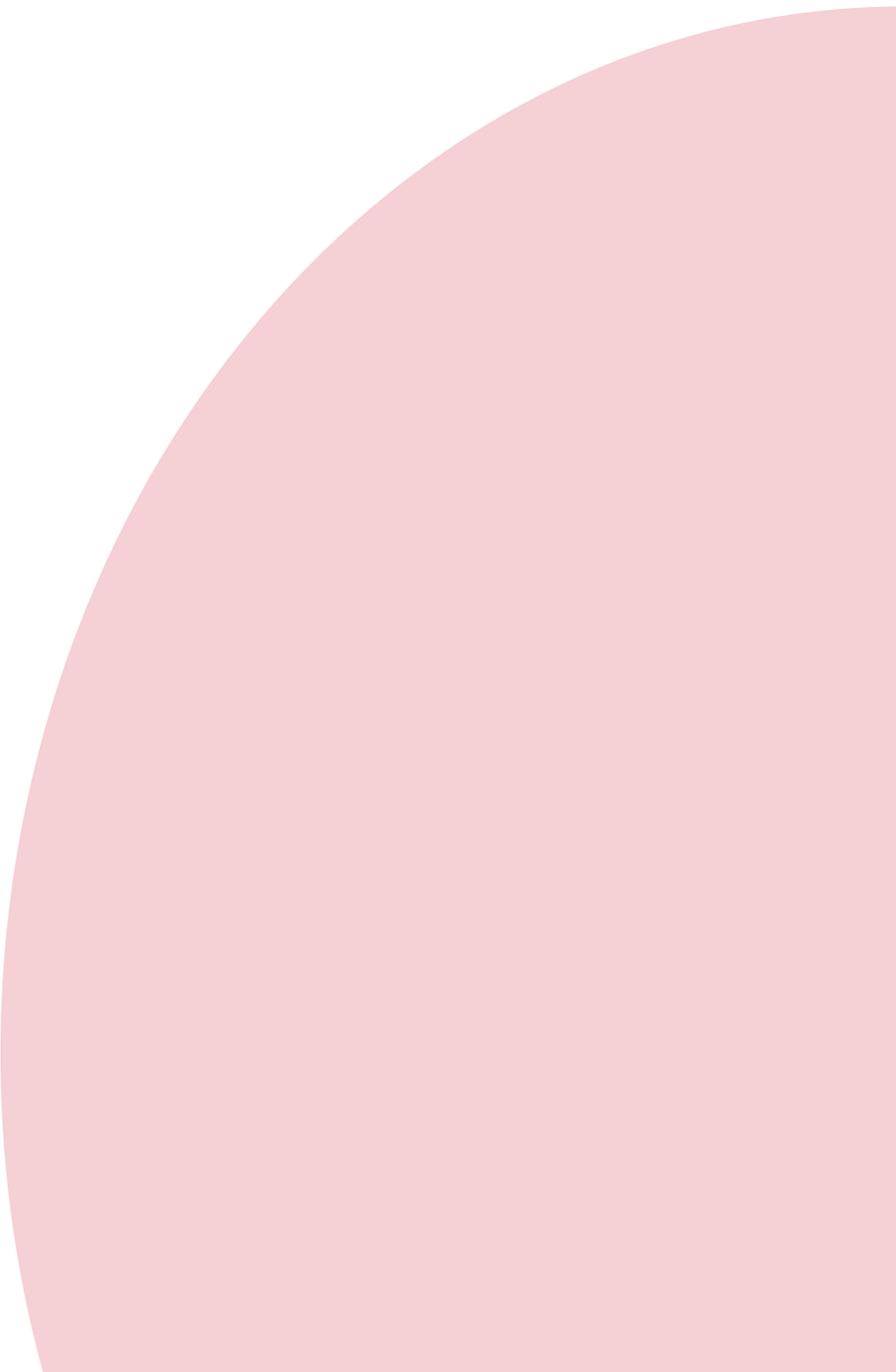
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