



GAYTON CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

PART 1 – CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

Prepared for Wirral Council by Donald Insall Associates Ltd 2007 – Wirral Council 2009

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PREFACE

Background to the Study

This report has been prepared by Donald Insall Associates Ltd on behalf of Wirral Council. Its purpose is to clarify the designation of the Conservation Area, which will protect and enhance the character of the historic core of the village of Gayton.

Scope and Structure of the Study

The scope of this Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan is based on the guidelines published by English Heritage ('Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals' and 'Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas', both dated February 2006) and represents a factual and objective analysis. In accordance with the guidelines, the following framework has been used as the basis for this analysis:-

- Location and population
- Origins and development of the settlement
- Prevailing or former uses and their influence on plan form or building type
- Archaeological significance
- Architectural and historic qualities of buildings
- Contribution made by key unlisted buildings
- Character and relationship of spaces
- Prevalent and traditional building materials
- Local details
- Contribution made by green spaces, trees, hedges, etc
- Setting of the Conservation Area and its relationship with the surrounding landscape
- Extent of loss, intrusion or damage
- Existence of any neutral areas

The document has been structured to encompass these areas of study and concludes with recommendations for the Conservation Area boundary and other matters such as provision of Article 4 Directions.

Existing Designations, Legal Framework for Conservation Areas and the Powers of the Local Authority

Since the 1967 Civic Amenities Act local authorities have been empowered to designate as Conservation Areas those areas within their districts which were considered 'special'. The subsequent Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act of 1990 consolidated those powers and defined Conservation Areas as:-

"areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance".

Such areas are diverse. They may be large or small; residential or commercial; civic or industrial; old or relatively modern. They may represent social ideals or civic pride. They may be specifically designed or speculatively produced; modest or grand. They may contain Listed Buildings of architectural or historic interest or may simply have local historic association. However, common to all will be an identifiable environmental quality which should be protected from unsympathetic redevelopment or alteration.

Wirral Council has declared 25 Conservation Areas throughout the Borough reflecting the variety of building styles and environments exhibited within its borders.

The content of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is clarified by national Planning Policy Guidance (PPG15): Planning and the Historic Environment and is supported by more recent Regional Planning Guidance for the North West (RPG13), which identifies as a key objective the need to ensure active management of the regions environmental and cultural assets.

The principles of these documents are further supported by Wirral Council's local Heritage Conservation policies contained within its Unitary Development Plan.

This legislation and policy framework enables the authority to exercise greater control over development within Conservation Areas and, where appropriate, this may be supplemented by the use of 'Article 4 Directions' to remove permitted development rights. In this way, minor changes, such as window replacement or loft conversions, which may be cumulatively detrimental, can be controlled.

National policy stipulates that local authorities have a duty to review, from time to time, their regions to ensure that places of special architectural or historic interest are being protected. The boundaries of existing Conservation Areas may be revised, new areas may be designated and those areas which have been eroded to the extent that their special character has been lost may be de-designated.

Whilst the Council recognises that, for Conservation Areas to remain 'live' and responsive to a changing society, changes must and will occur, it nevertheless undertakes to ensure that all changes make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of its Conservation Areas and do not result in any serious loss of character or features.

Planning legislation supports the authority in this by increasing its control over development. It does this in the following ways:

- Buildings and structures may not be demolished without formal consent from the Council (Conservation Area Consent).
- Trees are protected and all work to them requires consent from the Council.

- New development is expected to reflect the quality of design and construction of the surrounding area and should make a positive contribution to the area's character.
- Local planning authorities may, if necessary, exercise even greater control by removing the basic permitted development rights of householders.
- Under section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the Council has a legal obligation to ensure that "special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance" of the area when formulating decisions on planning applications.

The first step to protecting the inherent qualities of a Conservation Area is having a thorough understanding of its character and Planning Policy Guidance PPG15 advises that "the definition of an area's special interest should derive from an assessment of the elements that contribute to (and detract from) it".

This should then underpin local policies for the areas protection. Such a definition requires a thorough appraisal of the area to assess the contribution of each element (e.g. buildings, boundaries, trees, surfaces, etc.) to the areas overall character. PPG15 notes that "the more clearly the special architectural or historic interest that justifies designation is defined and recorded; the sounder will be the basis for local plan policies and development control decisions".

Whilst an appraisal aims to identify the essential elements which give an area its character, it is not intended as a detailed evaluation of each building and feature. Therefore any buildings, features and details may still have importance even though not specifically referred to in the document and any omissions do not indicate lack of merit or interest.

PART 1 – CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

1.0 LOCATION

1.1 GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION AND BRIEF DESCRIPTION

1.1.1 Gayton is a settlement on the west side of the Wirral Peninsula immediately south of the town of Heswall and about two miles north of Neston. Heswall and Gayton are now joined by suburban development.

1.1.2 Gayton is an historic settlement of probable Norse or earlier origins. It consists of a group of vernacular buildings, mainly 18th and 19th century in date, clustered around an earlier manor house. Despite some suburban encroachment the village retains a rural atmosphere and extensive mature woodland.

1.2 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

1.2.1 Like many settlements on the west coast of the Wirral, Gayton sits part way up the slope between the marshes of the Dee estuary to the west and the relatively flat plateau of central and southern Wirral to the east. The core of the settlement is on the north side of a small valley cut into the main slope by a small stream.

1.2.2 Gayton sits on thin boulder clay soils above outcropping Triassic red sandstone.

1.3 GENERAL USAGE

1.3.1 The majority of properties in the conservation area are residential. This part of Gayton and adjoining lower Heswall are considered rather exclusive and are much sought after. Heswall Golf Club has its clubhouse and part of its car park within the conservation area.

1.4 CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY AND STATUTORY DESIGNATIONS

1.4.1 Gayton was designated as a Conservation Area in April 1979. The boundary incorporates the village core and the landscape associated with Gayton Hall. To the north, east and south the boundary follows property boundaries, field boundaries and lanes. A short length of the boundary to the west is drawn across open ground to include the Clubhouse.

1.4.2 A number of modern buildings, some of no special interest, are included within the conservation area boundary. Some of these form the setting for the conservation area, others are within the heart of the area. Their

boundaries and planting are integral to the character of the area and any future development of these sites will impact on the character of the area as a whole.

- 1.4.3 There are three listed buildings / groups of buildings within the village: Gayton Hall (Grade II*); the former dovecot to Gayton Hall (Grade II*); and The Old Farm, Gayton Farm Lane (Grade II).

2.0 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

2.1 EARLY HISTORY AND ORIGINS OF SURROUNDING AREA

- 2.1.1 Gayton is believed to be a settlement of Norse origins, although a Norse name may have been given to an earlier settlement. Its name is a Scandinavian form of the Old Norse Gata-tun or Geit-tun meaning a farmstead or enclosure where goats are kept. Spellings have varied over time: Gayton in 1244 and Geyton in 1286.
- 2.1.2 Gayton receives specific mention in the Domesday Book as the possession of Robert of Ruddlan. Along with agriculture, fisheries are mentioned at Gayton. After Robert's death Gayton soon passed to Vale Royal Abbey. Its distance from Vale Royal was inconvenient and it was swapped by the Abbey for another estate closer to Vale Royal owned by Randle de Merton. He took Gayton along with land at Caldy and Chester in exchange. By 1330 the Merton family was without a male heir and the eldest daughter of John de Merton, Joan, married Gilbert Glegg. It remained in the Glegg family until the late 19th century.
- 2.1.3 Gayton is within the parish of Heswall and has no church, although the Hall contained a private chapel. The focal point of the village is the manor house. The current Hall dates from the 17th century but the presence of a moated site adjacent to the Hall indicates that there has been an important house in Gayton since an early date. The land around the Hall was enclosed as a park, also during the mediaeval period.

2.2 16TH AND 17TH CENTURY DEVELOPMENT

- 2.2.1 The Hall remained the home of the Glegg family throughout the 16th and 17th centuries. Surviving structures from this period include the dovecote (1630) and much of the Hall was constructed in the late 17th century.
- 2.2.2 During this period nearby Parkgate was an important port for ships crossing to Ireland. In 1689 William III stayed at Gayton Hall on his way to Ireland. William Glegg was given a knighthood as a result of his hospitality. Two evergreen oaks in the garden are reputed to have been planted in honour of the royal visit and are named William and Mary.

2.3 18TH AND EARLY 19TH CENTURY DEVELOPMENT

- 2.3.1 The Hall was updated with an elegant façade around 1750, giving it the appearance of a Georgian house.



Gayton Hall was refaced in the mid 18th century around 17th century core



The dovecote is dated 1630 and bears the initials EG (Edward Glegg)

- 2.3.2 Many of the former estate and farm buildings that survive also date from this period. These include the large range to the north of the Hall, (part of which is now known as the Coach House), Dove Cottage and the farmhouse and attached buildings now known as The Old Farm.

2.4 MID AND LATE 19TH CENTURY DEVELOPMENT

- 2.4.1 The later 19th century saw the construction of additional farm buildings and a number of modest houses. The park around the Hall was landscaped, probably during the 19th century. A series of ponds, dams and sluices may date from this time, along with an expansion of the woodland and the building of a new lodge on Gayton Lane. The Hall was sold and passed out of the Glegg family ownership during this period.



The Lodge on Gayton Lane and a former pair of cottages, now one house, known as Lister Lodge on Gayton Farm Road, both date from the late 19th century.

- 2.4.2 Other changes to the surrounding landscape occurred in this time. The railway between Hooton and West Kirby, a branch of the Chester and

Birkenhead Railway, opened in 1886, running through the fields below Gayton. Around the turn of the century large houses and villas began to spring up marking the beginning of Gayton as a suburban area.

2.5 20TH AND 21ST CENTURY CHANGES

2.5.1 The biggest change in the early 20th century was the arrival of the golf course. Opening in 1902 a clubhouse in Gayton was built in 1904, on a site immediately east of the current Clubhouse. This original building burned down in 1924 and was replaced by the current Clubhouse in 1926. Since then the Clubhouse has been expanded and altered a number of times.

2.5.2 The suburbs between Heswall and Gayton expanded rapidly in a piecemeal fashion. Development occurred both between the wars and after the Second World War. The early developments were substantial houses in large grounds, but from the 1930s onwards some areas of smaller semi detached housing also sprang up. Late 20th century housing has often occurred through the demolition of large villas and the redevelopment of the site with a number of smaller houses or bungalows.

2.5.3 Even Gayton Hall was affected by this division of plots and infill development. Much of the parkland was sold and a large new house, the Dormy House, was erected close to the Hall and accessed via the Halls former drive. A new more modest access to the Hall was built off Gayton Farm Road.

2.5.3 The railway closed in 1962 and has since become The Wirral Way acting as a recreational pathway for pedestrians, horseriders, and cyclists between West Kirby and Hooton.

2.6 ARCHAEOLOGY

2.6.1 The Merseyside Archaeological Service Historic Environment Record (HER) holds numerous accounts of sites of interest in and around the Gayton Conservation Area. The records include:

- The Hall and its immediate surroundings are rich in sites: The Hall itself; the site of a moat; the park; two farmhouses; numerous outbuildings; a lodge; several ponds and related features.
- A well.
- A pinfold on Well Lane.
- Gayton Farm Road itself, as it continues south of the main settlement.

2.6.2 A full list of sites held in the HER is included at *Appendix F*.

3.0 LANDSCAPE AND VISTAS

3.1 SETTING AND RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SURROUNDING AREA

- 3.1.1 Gayton village sits on sloping ground overlooking the Dee estuary to the west and sheltered by rising, wooded land to the east.
- 3.1.2 Approached from the north or east the village is contiguous with the leafy suburbs of Gayton and Heswall. The built up nature of the area, extensive tree cover and often sunken roads mean that there are no views of the village from the east or north.
- 3.1.3 Land to the south and west of the village is made up of open farmland and the golf course leading down to the marshes. Woodland to the south partly screens the village but there are clear views towards the village from the golf course, the Wirral Way (a path following the line of the former railway) and the path along the edge of the marshes. The backdrop of mature trees and the white painted newer buildings on the western edge of the settlement are the most prominent features.

3.2 CHARACTER AND RELATIONSHIP OF SPACES

- 3.2.1 The heart of Gayton village has an intimate scale and retains a remarkable degree of its rural character. Gayton Farm Road has a linear form as it leads from Well Lane towards the Hall. Behind the buildings that front onto the lane are a series of small tracks, drives and courtyards creating a web of narrow routes and enclosed spaces.



Gayton Farm Road runs between Well Lane and the Hall before heading south out of the village. Set behind the buildings on this lane are courtyards and tracks creating a web of secondary routes and spaces.

3.2.2 From the top of Cottage Lane and as Gayton Farm Road turns south away from the Hall the nature of the space suddenly changes, with expansive views opening up across the estuary towards North Wales.

3.2.3 The wooded area behind the Hall is also essentially cut off from the views of the estuary and the small steep valley creates an air of seclusion. Similarly the length of Gayton Farm Road as it leaves the village and plunges between steep wooded banks is sheltered and enclosed.

3.3 VIEWS AND VISTAS

3.3.1 Spectacular views of the Dee estuary and North Wales are available from a number of places in the village. Mature trees frame the views down Gayton Farm Road and Cottage Lane, but from the vicinity of the clubhouse and the private gardens of some houses outside the heart of the village the views are uninterrupted and panoramic.



Views across the Dee estuary and over fields and the golf course towards North Wales are a feature of the conservation area.

3.3.2 The views along Gayton Farm Road of The Old Farm are charming and the scene remains virtually unchanged from what would have been seen over a century ago. The textured cobbled surface, stone and brick boundary walls and mature trees around the Hall all form part of the experience.

3.3.3 The Hall however is largely hidden from view, behind high walls and large trees and screened from behind by mature woodland.

3.3.4 The small courtyards and tracks provide a variety of short, enclosed views throughout the village.

3.4 GREEN SPACES AND PLANTING

3.4.1 There are distinct types of green space and planting within Gayton village:

3.4.2 **Mature woodland and parkland** occupies a considerable part of the conservation area. Much of this is however private, so the landscape features within the grounds of the Hall and Dormy House, such as ponds and tree lined avenues, are not generally seen by the public. The trees themselves are however a central part of the character of Gayton village providing the setting for many buildings and ensuring its separation from the suburban nature of the surrounding area. As well as the main area of woodland there are important groups of trees along Gayton Farm Road and around the junction of Well Lane and Cottage Lane. As well as native deciduous trees there are a significant number of evergreens, such as holly and Scots pine within some of the tree groups. The woodland is of value to wildlife, enhanced by its proximity to countryside with fields and hedges and to the internationally important marshes and estuary.



Mainly deciduous woodland around Dove Cottage and the dovecote and pine trees along the driveway to Gayton Wood.

3.4.3 **Domestic gardens** are seen around most houses, although the converted agricultural buildings are characterised by hard landscaped courtyards. Many of the gardens are attractive and appropriate within a rural setting. Gardens derived from the English tradition of informal cottage gardens, with mixed planting of modest scale, contribute to the character of the area, especially in the context of the domestic vernacular buildings. The higher status historic houses are set off by more formal gardens, again based on historic precedent. Native and traditional species of boundary planting such as privet, holly and hawthorn are regularly seen and are visually appropriate. Climbing plants such as ivy and wisteria are also in evidence. Mature native trees within gardens maintain the rural character of the village. The use of native species also helps promote wildlife, even within domesticated areas of land.

3.4.4 **The Golf Course** provides much of the setting for the conservation area. Its generally open character is similar to the windswept fields typically found close to the Dee estuary. However the smooth mown fairway and bunkers

have a colour and texture quite different from pasture land, as well as a lower value for wildlife than woodland, fields and hedges.

4.0 TOWNSCAPE AND PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS

4.1 GRAIN, SCALE, REPETITION AND DIVERSITY

4.1.1 As with most villages that have gradually grown over a long period, Gayton village has an irregular grain. The different historic uses and status of the buildings are reflected in the spaces between and around them. The limited range of building types, forms, scale and materials however give a high degree of cohesion to the heart of the settlement.

4.1.2 The majority of buildings in the village are of two storeys. The Hall is three storeys. Some former outbuildings and the modern bungalows are single storey.

4.1.3 All the buildings are of masonry construction with pitched roofs. The historic buildings fall into three main categories:

- Many of the former agricultural and ancillary buildings are linear in form, both straight ranges and L shaped, cranked around a yard, with long elevations often fronting onto paved areas.
- 19th century houses are typically modest in scale and almost square in plan, with short elevations sitting back from the road in a garden setting.
- The Hall (and Clubhouse) are large in scale and designed to impress, while the other historic buildings are modest and unassuming. Both of these large buildings front onto spacious grounds but have more confined access and working areas to the rear.

4.1.5 Plot sizes vary considerably within the conservation area. A cluster of houses on the northeast side of Gayton Farm Road are tightly packed with very little land around them, representing late 19th and 20th century infill development. The Old Farm and the two main groups of former agricultural buildings have more generous gardens and courtyards, broadly reflecting the working spaces needed around them for their original use.

4.1.6 Around the fringes of the conservation area both historic and more recent properties are set in spacious grounds and gardens. This reflects social aspirations at the time of their construction. The boundaries around these properties are based on historic curtilages or encroachment into former fields. In many cases historic boundary treatments survive around the newer buildings.

4.2 PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS AND FEATURES

4.2.1 The following buildings or structures have a higher status either historically, socially or architecturally or are of particular importance as being landmarks:

- Gayton Hall (imposing manor house, mainly 17th and 18th century)
- The dovecote (brick built 17th century octagonal structure)
- Dove Cottage and nearby outbuildings (probably 18th century brick and sandstone estate buildings)
- The Lodge, Gayton Lane (late 19th century Domestic Revival gatehouse, originally to Gayton Hall)
- The Old Farm (18th century brick farm house and farm buildings)
- Little Gayton Farm / Gayton Farm Barn (19th century brick farm buildings)
- Former outbuildings to the Hall / Coach House (18th or 19th century brick farm buildings)
- Lister Lodge, Gayton Farm Road (late 19th century brick cottages)
- Rose Cottage and Croft Cottage, Gayton Farm Road (late 19th century brick cottages)
- Older parts of Little Gayton House (late 19th century brick house)
- The Willows (mainly sandstone small estate building)

4.3 BOUNDARIES AND SURFACES

4.3.1 Gayton Farm Road is the most important route in the village. From Well Lane to the Hall it is surfaced in traditional cobbles (round, water worn duck-stones, not setts) which have been smoothed with years of use. The cobbled surface runs the full width of the highway between property boundaries with no pavement at its southern end, and has a pavement only on the west side at its northern end. The forecourt to Gayton Farm Barns / Little Gayton Farm is also in cobbles, with an area of stone flags.

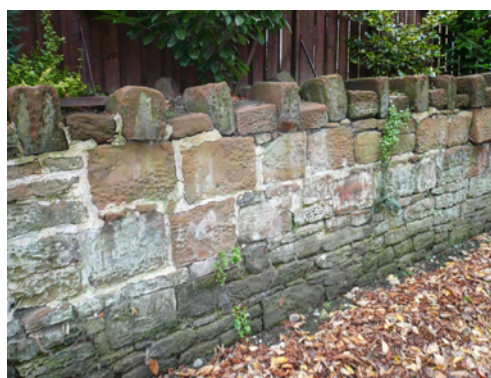


Gayton Farm Road, looking south away from The Old Farm and further south as it leaves the village. The unmade surface of the lane is fundamental to its character.

4.3.2 Past the Hall as the Lane turns south it becomes an unmade track with stones and gravel loose laid to improve the surface. Other visually significant tracks and drives in the village have the same gravel or unmade appearance. After

passing the drive to Gayton Wood, Gayton Farm Road becomes an unmade muddy track set between steep banks.

- 4.3.3 The entrance to the Golf Club, some pavements and the short stretches of Well Lane and Cottage Lane that are within the conservation area boundaries have modern tarmac surfaces.
- 4.3.4 The entrance to Dormy House, away from the heart of the village, uses stone setts. This was originally the main entrance to Gayton Hall.
- 4.3.4 Some drives and pavements have been constructed with concrete paviors and imitation setts. These are smoother and more regular in appearance than traditional cobbles.
- 4.3.3 Stone boundary walls within the conservation area are a key part of its visual character. Most walls are constructed of local red sandstone. Low walls are used around both agricultural and domestic properties. There are some variations in construction and design, but all are of roughly coursed stone, with some simple form of stone capping. High walls are also used, more often around the higher status historic houses and acting as retaining walls. The wall around the Hall is partially in brick and is buttressed along the lower part of Gayton Farm Road.
- 4.3.4 In many instances the boundary wall is backed by a hedge, such as clipped privet or hawthorn or a low picket fence. In some cases a high fence has been used to increase privacy, but a number of these fences are visually intrusive. Field boundaries and some property boundaries are hedging, mainly traditional varieties such as privet or mixed hedges with hawthorn predominating.



Roughly coursed sandstone walls, a simple picket fence and a gate inserted into a wall with no gate posts are all appropriate to the modest vernacular context. The wall on the right is in a poor state of repair and has been badly pointed.

- 4.3.5 A small number of stone gateposts are present, mainly associated with the entrances to higher status residential sites. The majority of gates are timber,

either five-bar, vertical boarded or, for smaller garden gates, vertical rails. The entrance gates adjacent to the Lodge on Gayton Lane are more elaborate in design, befitting the status of the entrance. Field gates are generally metal or timber five-bar gates.



The vernacular character of the village is typified by unmade tracks, roughly coursed stone walls, five-bar gates and informal hedging. In contrast the grand entrance to Dormy House (formerly the drive to Gayton Hall) features dressed stone walls, an elaborate gate, regular stone setts and an avenue of trees.

5.0 ARCHITECTURE, MATERIALS AND DETAILS

5.1 PROMINENT STYLES

5.1.1 The vast majority of buildings in Gayton village are vernacular. This includes both the houses and the agricultural buildings.

5.1.2 Former agricultural buildings and historic houses are constructed from locally sourced materials. Forms are simple and rectilinear and the buildings have moderate pitched or low pitched roofs with a central ridge line. Window openings are typically small and the buildings generally have a 'robust' character.



The Old Farm embodies many of the characteristics of a typical historic building in Gayton village. The late 19th century cottages are more symmetrical and have modest decoration yet represent the continuation of many vernacular characteristics.

5.1.3 Gayton Hall is the principal building in the village and its architecture reflects its social status at the time of its principal phases of construction. Its

elegant, three storey brick and stone exterior dates from the mid 18th century. It has a grandeur and symmetry which contrasts with the modesty of the other historic buildings in the village.

- 5.1.4 The Lodge on Gayton Lane is in the Domestic Revival style and uses red pressed brick, elaborate render pargetting and a red clay tile roof.
- 5.1.5 Buildings dating from the 20th century have, by and large, ignored the local vernacular, using forms and materials not specific to the area. They are however broadly traditional in their use of masonry walls and dual pitched roofs. Most of the more modern developments have smooth white painted render for their principal external walls. This sets them apart from the historic buildings as a distinct group. One bungalow uses a machine made buff brick, which does not respond to either the local materials or the crisp render of other modern development.
- 5.1.6 Two late 20th century house have been constructed in red brick, one in imitation of the late 19th century cottages on Gayton Farm Road. Local red sandstone has been used for some small extensions as well as for rebuilding on the sites of former ancillary estate buildings.



The Laurels, 79 Well Lane reflects the materials and details of the adjacent historic cottages. The Willows has been extended in local sandstone and Welsh slate.

5.2 KNOWN ARCHITECTS AND DESIGNERS

- 5.2.1 The 1920s Clubhouse at Heswall Golf Club was originally designed by Herbert Rowse, well known for his work at the Liverpool Philharmonic Hall and Mersey Tunnel buildings. The Clubhouse, originally Italianate in style, was not one of his better works and the building has subsequently been much altered.
- 5.2.2 No further information concerning the architects or designers of other buildings within the conservation area was available at the time of writing this report.

5.3 MATERIALS

- 5.3.1 The principal materials employed in the historic buildings of Gayton village are soft red / brown brick for external walls, roughly coursed local red sandstone for boundary walls and some ancillary buildings and Welsh slate for the roofs. Timber windows are traditionally painted and small paned. The Hall uses this same palette of materials with the addition of yellow/buff sandstone, also locally sourced, for dressings and quoins.
- 5.3.2 More modern domestic buildings and the Clubhouse mainly have painted render walls and concrete tile roofs. Two of the bungalows on Well Lane use imported stone cladding in a non-traditional manner. Just three newer buildings are built of brick, one being a pale buff colour which contrasts sharply with the locally sourced materials. Stained timber is used for some modern windows. The Clubhouse employs large expanses of glazing to allow wide views of the golf course.

5.4 TYPICAL FEATURES AND DETAILS

- 5.4.1 **Windows** within the Gayton village conservation area that enhance its character are principally traditional timber windows. These are of three main types: small paned side hung casements; small paned vertical sliding sashes with exposed sash boxes; and small paned horizontal sliding sashes (or Yorkshire lights). Traditionally these timber windows are painted and are most usually found in domestic buildings. Some historic agricultural buildings may have had casements, but shutters were more likely to have been used.
- 5.4.2 Window openings to the lower status historic houses and former agricultural buildings are typically small, squarish in proportion and have little or no decoration to their surrounds. Some original large openings, such as cart doors, in former agricultural buildings have had large windows and door screens inserted. Gauged brick arches are most often used to form window heads although some openings are supported on the timber window frame. Most window openings have no projecting cill.



Vertical and horizontal sliding sash windows and casements can all be seen on one building here at The Old Farm. The window openings are unadorned.

5.4.3 The Hall has highly elaborate details to its principal windows, with gauged flat brick arches and contrasting stone key stones. Similarly, the later 19th century houses have more elaboration to their structural openings, with stone or special bricks used for lintels, arches and sills.

5.4.4 **Roof details** to almost buildings within the conservation area are very simple. The roof pitches are low to medium and clad in Welsh slate. Clay ridge tiles of angular form are used, in both red and grey. Ridges mainly run parallel to the front of the building and end gables are simply treated. On the majority of the historic buildings the purlins project beyond the gable wall to allow the roof verge to overhang. Some of these gables are finished with a narrow barge board, others have exposed rafters. Eaves typically have a minimal overhang.



The simple roof form and verge detail of Little Gayton Farm / Gayton Barns is typical of the conservation area.

5.4.5 The Hall has prominent stone parapets. Dove Cottage is the only other historic building with parapets, to its gable ends.

5.4.6 The late 19th century cottages on Gayton Farm Road and the Lodge on Gayton Lane have more complex roof forms than the earlier buildings. The cottages have small decorative dormers to the main elevations, although the pitch, eaves and verge details are similar to those on earlier buildings. The Lodge roof is deliberately steep in pitch to give it prominence, further elaborated with gables and dormers.

5.4.7 **Chimneys** play a part in the visual composition of most domestic buildings. Former agricultural buildings can be identified by the absence of chimneys or chimneys that are clearly later additions. The degree of decoration to chimneys in Gayton village generally relates to their age, with earlier buildings having simple stacks with two projecting courses of brick near the top and later 19th century chimneys featuring banding and projections executed in special bricks. Pots vary in design, but most are plain, round and red.

5.4.8 **Doors and entrances** are not generally given prominence in the historic buildings in the conservation area. The Old Farm and Lister Lodge have modest projecting porches. Traditionally doors would have been simple boarded or panelled timber, without decoration or glazing.

5.4.9 The Hall however has an elaborate carved stone doorcase, featuring an open segmental pediment and Ionic pilasters.

5.4.10 **Old agricultural buildings** typically have a range of features relating to their original use, such as ventilation holes, pitching eyes and cart doors. The dovecote's octagonal tower form is very specific to its original function. The small high level openings for the birds are also very distinctive.

6.0 NEGATIVE FACTORS

6.1 OVERVIEW

6.1.1 A study of this nature cannot attempt to highlight every part of the built environment that has a detrimental impact on the character or setting of the conservation area. Instead this report summarises the most apparent of examples and key problems within the conservation area as a way of encouraging an understanding and awareness of these issues.

6.1.2 Appended to this document is a plan showing the contribution of buildings to the character of the conservation area. The plan was produced as a tool to gain an understanding of the significance of different parts of the village and to inform as to the appropriateness of the boundary. This plan categorizes each building, or group of buildings into the following groupings:

- A: (Red) – Buildings that are critical to the character of the area: typically these may be landmark buildings and / or historic buildings with most of their original character retained
- B: (Yellow) – Buildings that contribute positively to the character of the conservation area: historic buildings may have some alterations but original character is still prominent
- C: (Green) – Neutral - Either modern buildings of little interest or buildings where character has been lost beyond economic redemption.
- D: (Blue) – Buildings that detract from the significance or character of the area.

6.2 RECENT DEVELOPMENT

6.2.1 Major change began to occur for Gayton village at the end of the 19th century as suburban life encroached into the surrounding farmland. The demise of the Hall as a country estate, the division of the former Hall grounds, the construction of the Dormy House and the arrival of the golf course all spelled the end of Gayton village's historic role.

6.2.2 The second half of the 20th century has seen a significant amount of development in Gayton, as pressure for housing has grown. This has led to the conversion of agricultural buildings to residential use and the construction of a number of new houses, both within the conservation area boundary and in the surrounding area.

6.2.3 The majority of the development has not been sensitive to the historic character of the village. However, most of these newer buildings are around the edges of the historic settlement. They form part of the contemporary setting of the village but generally do not intrude into views within the conservation area.



Two developments which are not in keeping with the character of the conservation area, one at the edge and one in the heart of the village. Importantly however the sandstone boundary walls and planting are very much characteristic of the area.

6.2.4 The most recent developments within the heart of the conservation area have been modest in scale. They have generally attempted to reflect the forms and materials of the historic estate buildings but sometimes display a limited understanding of traditional construction techniques and details.



The Old Bakehouse is a new development that has attempted to reflect the characteristics of former farm buildings with mixed success.

6.3 UNSYMPATHETIC ALTERATIONS

6.3.1 There have been alterations to the historic buildings within the conservation area. Some of these changes are detrimental to the architectural character of the building and adversely affect the quality of the area as a whole. These changes include:

- The insertion of new, or alteration to existing, openings, particularly to agricultural buildings during conversion
- Replacing original windows with unsuitable modern designs and materials such as UPVC
- Changes to the ground surface and boundary treatments around historic buildings.

6.3.2 Barns and many other former agricultural buildings by their nature have few window openings and their conversion to residential use can compromise their appearance. Too many new window openings and openings of large size can result in a loss of character. Where new windows have been created in former agricultural buildings it is small openings that have least impact on the building's original character. Sometimes single paned windows are more successful than multi-paned windows, being simpler and less "domestic" in appearance.



The conversion of the Coach House and the adjoining property introduced an excessively domestic porch and intrusive window details to this former farm building. The strong form of the original building survives and any future alterations can be carried out to better reflect the original character of the building.

6.3.3 The replacement of original windows is generally well intentioned; to improve the thermal or acoustic performance or to reduce maintenance requirements for instance. The visual effect, particularly on the architecturally simple buildings, is almost always immense. The authenticity of the historic building is undermined.

6.3.4 The reconfiguration of opening panes also dramatically changes the architectural character of the building. Where windows are replaced in timber, these can also adversely affect the appearance of the building where the original detailing is not followed. Often the quality of modern timber is far poorer than the original, giving it a short lifespan. Secondary glazing can be used as an alternative and will always produce a more satisfactory visual result than a double glazed equivalent.

6.3.5 The setting of historic buildings depends to a large degree on the colour and texture of ground surfaces. Boundary treatments are also fundamental to the character and appearance of an area. The conversion of agricultural buildings in Gayton village has been successful in avoiding the creation of domestic gardens around the buildings. The conversions retain their

courtyard atmosphere. However some modern paving materials have been employed which are harsh and alien in appearance.

- 6.3.6 The desire for privacy also brings potential conflict. Hedges grow more slowly than a fence can be erected and a number of properties have high boarded fences on boundaries facing the public realm. These introduce a modern element, lacking in the texture and subtle colours of traditional boundary treatments. Such fences also obstruct longer views and reduce the visual permeability of the area. Fast growing hedge materials such as conifers and large leafed laurel also introduce colours and textures out of context with the vernacular landscape.



Man made setts are too uniform in colour and texture for use in large areas. This low stone wall to Gayton Farm Road is topped by a very high timber fence and a mixture of unsuitable shrub species. In both cases the effect is too harsh.

6.4 UNSYMPATHETIC EXTENSIONS

- 6.4.1 There are few recent extensions of any significant size to residential buildings within the conservation area. Extensions dating back to the middle of the 20th century include part of Little Gayton House, which like other developments of the time is rather prominent and finished in white render, and an almost flat roofed single storey block adjoining the Coach House. These predate conservation area designation and are now established features of the area. They are not of a design that would be considered appropriate today.

6.5 CONDITION, LOSS AND DEVELOPMENT PRESSURES

- 6.5.1 All the buildings within Gayton village are in a good or fair state of repair. There has been remarkably little loss of built historic fabric in the last 100 years. The only building of substance visible on late 19th century maps that no longer exists is an L shaped range of buildings to the side and rear of The Old Farm. Significant change has however occurred in the development of previously open space around the historic buildings. There are roughly equal numbers of buildings dating from before and after the turn of the 20th century.

- 6.5.2 Gayton is a very desirable residential area. Close to the conservation area older properties in large plots are under pressure for demolition and redevelopment with small estates of houses.
- 6.5.3 The conservation area lies within the Green Belt. Under Wirral's *Unitary Development Plan* it is stated that Planning permission will not be granted for residential development within the greenbelt with the exception of the limited infilling in existing villages, including limited affordable housing subject to local community needs. *Supplementary Planning Guidance Note 6, Design and Density Control Guidelines (Gayton)* has been produced to manage this pressure for infill development and retain the spacious, wooded character of Gayton as a whole.
- 6.5.4 The Clubhouse at Heswall Golf Club has recently been refurbished. It has extensive car parking that is well screened by trees and shrubs but inevitably represents a large hard surfaced area partially within the conservation area and a generator of traffic on Well Lane.

6.6 CHANGES TO PUBLIC REALM AND OPEN SPACE

- 6.6.1 Gayton Farm Road is the principal public space and route within Gayton village conservation area. It has retained its traditional cobbled surface from Well Lane to the end of The Old Farm's garden where the lane turns south past the Hall. The cobbles are well laid and smoothed by years of use. There has been some disturbance to the cobbles adjacent to property boundaries.
- 6.6.2 The southern extremity of the lane as it runs out of the village down towards the Dee estuary is of a more informal character with no made surface and irregular grassy verges. It is on this portion of lane that Gayton Well is situated. The lane itself was once the principal route through to Chester and it is probable that the well supplied horses and other drove animals with water as they hauled up the slope. This artefact is in the process of restoration utilising Council and locally sourced funds. Many drives and tracks off the lane and that leading to Dove Cottage have a similar character. Some uses of modern paving materials such as artificial setts and unsuitable boundary fences are visible from the public realm and detract from the overall character of these otherwise rustic spaces.
- 6.6.3 There is no public open space in Gayton village. However the golf course and the fields south of the village form an expansive open space which spills out over the marshes and estuary to panoramic, uninterrupted views of North Wales. The contrast between this open, exposed aspect and the shelter and enclosure provided by the historic buildings is fundamental to the character of the area. Development that intrudes into these views and structures such as lighting columns can reduce their interest and introduce alien and suburban elements.

- 6.6.4 There is little street furniture within the conservation area. Road name signs are of standard design but mounted on timber back boards and / or posts. A public footpath sign is also in timber. There are no streetlights along Gayton Farm Road. Where street lights are present on Well Lane and Cottage Lane they are mounted on both older style concrete columns and more modern steel columns of standard design and appear rather obtrusive. There is a single bench on Well Lane.
- 6.6.5 The golf club's car park has pole mounted security cameras and a control barrier that are, fortunately, not highly visible from the highway. The club's sign is low key and traditional in appearance, painted in muted colours of green, white and yellow.

7.0 SUMMARY OF SPECIAL CHARACTER

7.1 The following is a list of features and information that are part of Conservation Area's special character:

- An ancient settlement of Norse or earlier origins.
- The village has grown up gradually over time, with 18th and 19th century buildings now dominating.
- Buildings are generally simple in character, with considerable unity of building materials.
- Despite its proximity to neighbouring suburbs the conservation area retains a distinct rural character.
- Gayton Hall, the dovecote and numerous former farm buildings comprise an important group of historic buildings. Gayton Hall itself is a building of considerable architectural and historic interest
- The cobbled surface of Gayton Farm Road is an unusual survival of historic paving and is essential to the character of the area.
- Sandstone boundary walls and native hedging are important features within the area.
- Locally made red / brown brick and local red sandstone are the most prominent building materials in the village. The majority of roofs with historic coverings are slated.
- Openings and features such as chimneys are generally simple in character. Traditional small paned timber windows are important features on both grand and modest buildings in the conservation area.
- Informal, unmade lanes and tracks are prevalent within the conservation area.
- Extensive woodland and groups of mature trees are a key element in the area
- Panoramic views from parts of the conservation area across open space to the Dee estuary and North Wales contrast with the shelter of the trees and enclosure provided by the historic buildings
- Many recent developments in the village have not respected its character.