

Vale Royal Borough Council

# **FRODSHAM (CASTLE PARK LOCALITY) CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL**



**VR** VALE ROYAL  
Borough Council  
The heart of Cheshire

Conservation Areas were introduced by the Civic Amenities Act of 1967, and are now an accepted part of Town and Country Planning legislation and practice. Local Authorities are required to identify “areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”. They are also under a duty to review existing designations from time to time.

It has been recognised that if the special interest, character and appearance of a conservation area is to be retained, it must be managed. The first task in this process is to define and analyse the special characteristics that justify the designation of the conservation area. This is achieved by carrying out a Conservation Area Appraisal.

The character of an area depends upon its historic background, the architectural quality and interest of its buildings, their materials and detailing, the way they relate to each other, the line of the highway, the quality of the landscape, trees and open spaces and a variety of unique features.

A Conservation Area Appraisal provides a description of those elements that contribute to and define the character of the conservation area. It also provides the basis for development plan policies and development control decisions, both within and adjacent to the Conservation Area boundary. Subsequently the appraisal will provide the background for proposals to preserve or enhance the area. It may also identify development opportunities. Therefore the Government has stated that appraisals are considered to be essential for all existing and proposed conservation areas.

Vale Royal Borough Council understands the importance of involving the local community in the appraisal process. It has recognised that these studies are only valid if those people who are most closely affected by the designation of the conservation area accept the content of the appraisal. As a result, a public consultation exercise has been undertaken, the considered responses from which have been incorporated into this final version of the appraisal.

The Borough Council's methodology for conducting Conservation Area Appraisals has been accepted as an example of Good Practice In Conservation by the Royal Town Planning Institute. However the Council has resolved to continue to revise and improve its methodology for conducting conservation area appraisals whilst striving to maintain a degree of consistency between the various completed studies.

The principal effects of this designation are as follows:

1. The Council is under a duty to prepare proposals to ensure the preservation or enhancement of the area
2. In carrying out its functions under the Planning Acts, and in particular when determining applications for planning permission and conservation area or listed building consent, the Council and the Secretary of State are required to take into account the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area
3. Permitted development rights are more restricted within the designated area
4. Consent must be obtained from the Council for the demolition of any building in the area (subject to certain exceptions)
5. Special publicity must be given to planning applications for development in the area
6. Six weeks' notice must be given to the local planning authority before any works are carried out to trees within the designated area. It becomes an offence, subject to certain exceptions, to cut down, top, lop, uproot, wilfully damage or destroy any tree in the area without the prior written consent of the local planning authority

## HISTORY

### 1. Historic evolution of the site

#### 1.1 Origins and development of the site

- Important area in prehistoric period
  - Hill forts nearby
- Little evidence of Roman activity
  - Roman road probably along Howey Lane to Overton
  - Rumoured to be site of a Roman fort
- Probable original royal estate centred on nearby Overton
- Manor of Frodsham granted to Hugh Lupus, 1<sup>st</sup> Norman Earl of Chester, 1070
- Domesday Survey notes importance of *Frotesham*
  - Frod's village held by Earl of Mercia.
- Early C13th - Borough charter
- Castle/Manor House recorded on site - destroyed 1654
  - Replaced by Park Place - Georgian mansion, in 1750
  - Site acquired 1851 by Joseph Stubs – reconstructed, extended - gardens landscaped by Edward Kemp
  - Acquired by Wright - renamed Castle Park circa 1861
  - Estate farm buildings added - 1870's
  - Gifted by Wright family to Runcorn Rural District Council in 1933
  - Adjoining land purchased by Runcorn R.D.C. in 1934 & 1937 - considerably increasing park size to 16 acres



Extract from Burdett's map of 1777

#### 1.2 Topographic elements that have influenced the development form

- Founded on harder Keuper Sandstones at base of Frodsham Hill
  - Permeable Waterstones above to South-East
  - Red sandstone bedrock exposed in bed of watercourse in East of park
- Spring line above town at Overton
  - Watercourses run through site
  - Allowed development of water mills
  - Facilitated creation of aesthetic water features

#### 1.3 Influences of current or previous land uses on the area

- Manor, C13th, (no evidence of a castle)
  - Mediaeval fishponds on site
  - Water mills on site and nearby
- Private dwelling and estate from 1750
  - Extensively landscaped in 1855
- Impact of railway to North-West of site circa 1850 – separated site from town
- Public buildings and park from 1933

## 2. Archaeological significance and potential of the area

- No Scheduled Ancient Monuments within Conservation Area
- Sites and Monuments Record includes -
  - Fortified manor house of C13<sup>th</sup>
  - Watermills - mediaeval
  - Fishponds - mediaeval
  - Tower noted in C14<sup>th</sup>
- Identified as having archaeological potential in Cheshire Historic Towns Survey (2002 Final Report)

## TOWNSCAPE

### 3. Form and structure of the site

#### 3.1 Boundary of the conservation area

- Commencing in North-East at the railway bridge over Fountain Lane and moving in a clockwise direction - boundary follows Northern boundary of Thoresby (No 6)



Fountain Lane - encloses plot to rear of Nos 6 and 8 and rear curtilages of No 10 Fountain Lane and play area corner of Princeway - then follows road centre-line back around to Fountain Lane



**Properties on Fountain Lane**

- Runs along Southern boundary of Park Court - then rear curtilage of Nos 63 and 61 Park Lane along stone wall to rear of The Croft - along centre-line of passage adjacent to No 59 Park Lane and along centre-line of Park Lane



**Nos 53 to 59 Park Lane**

- Along centre-line of passage adjacent to No 53 Park Lane - then along Westerly fence-line boundary to rear of properties on Park Lane - turning North-East along West side of public footpath adjacent to Pinmill Croft to Park Lane - East along centre-line of road which becomes a pathway - along frontage of orchard - then Southerly along East side of another public footpath to Howey Lane and along its centre-line



**Railings and stone wall to Howey Lane**

- Then - North - West - Southerly - around rear garden curtilages of Nos 32 to 40 Howey Lane - enclosing service road access - returns to Howey Lane - briefly along its centre-line - then to North-West and around curtilage of No 44 Howey Lane
- South-Westerly - around circular clump of trees - along metal post and bar railing - tall hawthorn hedge adjacent -forming rear garden boundaries of Nos 46 to 56 Howey Lane and around metal railing and deciduous hedging of No 64



**Playing field is enclosed by boundary**

- Then acutely North along rear concrete post and timber panel fence to No 16 Netherton Drive - to centre-line of Netherton Drive which it follows Northerly to No 46 Netherton Drive - whence it follows Eastern boundary concrete post and timber panel fence of that property - North then West along rear of Nos 46 to 50 - then the timber fence of No 51 to Chester Road

- Then North along centre-line of Chester Road - turns to North-East just before railway bridge and continues along timber post and rail fence at base of railway embankment back to railway bridge over Fountain Lane

### 3.2 Views within, into and out of the area

- Linear view along drive – between trees and walls of main house



**Main driveway looking East**

- From main access driveway alongside railway embankment and main house are glimpsed views to distant tree cover -
  - Across ever-changing clutter of enclosed main car park



**Busy time in main car park**

- Through scattered trees by main house and past children's play area and casual recreational activities on flat open parkland grass

- Framed view through brick archway across attractive floral displays in enclosed formal gardens to feature urn - site of former water feature - then second former water fountain - large stone - just beyond garden - all aligning to Cenotaph on Frodsham Hill - now hidden by trees



**Formal Garden from brick arch to feature urn**

- Reverse view to brick archway with painted urn - in foreground



**Formal garden**

- Close to Fountain Lane entrance -
  - Into variety of interesting, enclosed courtyards
- Occasional 'Planned' vistas toward main house from paths at edge of woodland



close by American Garden, framed by feature trees and landscaping

- Interesting, short term views within contrasting light and shade of heavy tree cover throughout central and Eastern portion of Park



**Dappled light by American Garden water-course**

- Views into Conservation Area are few and limited
  - At entrances access - driveways curve away - some are screened - creating initial series of only short term views
- Distant views of War Memorial Obelisk on Frodsham Hill to South-East from various locations throughout area



**War Memorial on Frodsham Hill**

- Panorama of open views from open grassland sports-field in South of Park
  - Glimpsed views to West - between houses - to overhead power-lines and pylons and distant smoking oil refinery stacks

- Clear views of Mersey estuary and South Merseyside to North through more prominent gaps
  - Main House is screened by trees
- South-South-East from Fountains Lane along Park Lane to Frodsham Hill
- Framed by railway bridge crossing Fountain Lane, to Main Street



**Under railway bridge to Main Street**

- From the main entrance - short term view across road - closed by tall thorn hedge along west side of busy A56

### 3.3 *The importance of spaces within the conservation area*

- Castle Park - composed of series of spaces of contrasting size, function and character - interlinked by meandering paths and walkways
  - Smaller courtyards in North of Conservation Area contrast with open parkland in its South
  - Important linear watercourse corridor in East of park
  - Whole collection of spaces contrasts with linear enclosure of adjacent Frodsham Town Conservation Area
- Fountain Lane - separate space of no significance - defined by railway bridge and tall walls of Park Court - extends beyond Conservation Area
  - Grassed play area - corner of Prince Way - enclosed by tall sandstone wall
- East of Pinmill Croft - established and replanted garden orchard – shown on 1870 Ordnance Survey map - now also

grazed - links to pre-development character of area



**Former orchard East of Pinmill Croft**

### 3.4 *Enclosure within the site*

- Tree covered railway embankment - dominant form of enclosure to North-West boundary of Conservation Area
  - At foot of railway embankment - simple post and rail timber fence
- Park boundary along Chester Road (A56) - formed by old low sandstone coped wall
  - North side of main entrance - has another wall to rear - rustic brick topped with modern but simple metal railings - space between walls tapers from 0 in North to 3 metres by gates
- Large block red/brown sandstone walls and copings of assorted heights to Fountain Lane - low ones have metal railings above
- Low brick walls - sandstone coped to Park Lane properties
- Holly hedges throughout the park
  - Overgrown into trees – screen North-Western boundary of main car park
  - Incomplete - close to entrance from Fountain Lane
  - Alongside service road access from Howey Lane - neatly trimmed near service/maintenance sheds
- Tall brick walls - freestanding and walls of groups of buildings - enclose formal garden and courtyards
- Tall Beech hedge above low stone wall to East boundary of main car park

- Traditional original metal spike topped railings - found along Conservation Area boundary - close to watercourse in East



**Original spike topped railings by Synagogue Well**

- Similar railings - with blunt tops - over low brick wall - found along boundary of Park Court - former Fire Station - converted to residential properties



**Modern railings enclosing Park Court**

- Modern, low, standardised hoop-topped green railings to
  - Children's play area
  - Inappropriately - around restored American Garden pond
- Tall chain-link fencing to tennis courts
- Simple metal post and single top rail to one side of bowling green
- Sections of simple low metal post and bar railings mainly along Southern boundary of park
  - Overgrown by bushes in South
  - Original gate to rear garden of No 40 Howey Lane



- In South-East of Conservation Area
  - Recent tall, solid, timber fence along Western boundary of Pinmill Croft
  - Pinmill Croft on Park Lane - untidy tall hedge - reinforced by poor quality chicken and sheep wire mesh netting
  - Adjacent to public footpath between Kingsway and Howey Lane - fencing is timber post and rail supporting Chestnut pales reinforced by chain link and topped by barbed wire



**Footpath fencing to field by Pinmill Croft**

- Utilitarian concrete post and timber panel fencing is common to rear garden fences in West of Conservation Area

### 3.5 *Urban Form*

- Conservation Area - an irregular shape
- Planned layout of Castle Park estate
  - Majority of buildings located in North and North-East area
  - Except for main house - original estate buildings are located around series of small courtyards
- Isolated late C20<sup>th</sup> Pavilion overlooks bowling green in East of park
- Assorted single-story late C20<sup>th</sup> service/maintenance buildings grouped together in quieter South-Eastern area of park
- Fountain Lane properties - except Park Court - usual residential layouts - located central within each dwelling plot

### 3.6 *Road Pattern*

- Essentially contained by four highways

- Fountain Lane runs briefly through North-East of Conservation Area - then becomes Park Lane which was only a footpath track in 1870
- Three vehicular access points to park
  - Principal entrance from Chester Road in North-West
  - From Fountain Lane in North-East
  - From Howey Lane in South-East (service access)
- Five pedestrian access points to park
  - From a public footpath leading from Park Lane in South-East



**Footpath steps close to Synagogue Well**

- Unsigned access path from Netherton Drive to West



**Path and steps leading to Netherton Drive access**

- From Chester Road in North-West adjacent to principal vehicular access
- From Fountain Lane in North-East adjacent to vehicular access
- From Howey Lane in South-South-East (part of service access)



- Linear main driveway runs from Chester Road principal entrance in North-West to Fountain Lane in North-East
  - Recently closed by two removable bollards by entrance to main house
  - Has traffic management humps
- Service access from Howey Lane in South-East proceeds North-West to approximate centre of park
  - Then bends and proceeds to North-East - passes between bowling green and tennis courts
  - At North-East corner of bowling green - proceeds North-West to meet main driveway by Arts Centre where it is gated - usually locked
  - Need for security against vehicular through traffic is also affecting public access and pedestrian flows

## 4. Buildings

### 4.1 Age Profile

- Castle Park House
  - Cellar walls - formed from parts of foundation walls of earlier (possibly C13<sup>th</sup>) Castle/Manor House
  - Doubtful claim of Roman origin
  - Park Place constructed late C18<sup>th</sup>
  - Reconstructed and extended - 1851
  - Extended to East by mid C20<sup>th</sup> flat roofed Council Chamber - on site of original kitchen yard



**Council Chamber**

- Range of estate management buildings circa 1851 - with added late C20<sup>th</sup> single

- storey buildings and extensions - also Lodge of 1863 - now No 6 Fountain Lane
- Range of former farm buildings (late C20<sup>th</sup> residential conversion) - and Nos 8 and 10 Fountain Lane - all on exchanged 'Glebe' land - circa 1870
- Residential 'Glebe' properties on Park Lane of late C19<sup>th</sup>
- Mid C20<sup>th</sup> Pinmill Croft on Park Lane
- Modern late C20<sup>th</sup> bowling green pavilion
- Modern late C20<sup>th</sup> parkland service/management sheds in South of park

### 4.2 Dominant Architectural styles and types

- Neo-classical Victorian reconstruction and extension of Georgian House



**Main House from parkland**

- Victorian estate management, stables and farm buildings - converted and extended late C20<sup>th</sup>
- Mid Victorian lodge and semi-detached properties on Fountain Lane
- Late Victorian polychrome brick quasi-semi detached properties on Park Lane
- Utilitarian service/maintenance sheds and Pinmill Croft - of no special interest

### 4.3 Building materials – texture and colours

- Blue/grey Welsh slate - usually hipped - roofs with plain ridge tiles generally
  - Timber eaves brackets to hooded porch roofs and North bay eaves of West elevation of Park Court
  - Timber louvred tower roof vents on some outbuildings

- Plain red tiles - including ridge - on bowling green pavilion and Pinmill Croft
- Warm - Cheshire red/buff brickwork
  - Flemish bond to main house
  - Garden bond common elsewhere
  - But - poor re-pointing on Arts Centre
  - Alternating red and blue rubbed brick sections to oculii and arches on Park Court



**Slate, timber, brick and stone on Park Court**

- Rustic red/brown bricks on purple soldier plinth to bowling green pavilion
- Hard dark red brickwork with multiple relief string courses and plinth on Nos 8 and 10 Fountain Lane
  - One blue engineering brick string-course and cant detail to plinth top
- Brown bricks to Nos 53 to 59 - buff polychrome detailing to front bay windows, openings, quoins, corbelled eaves and chimney tops
  - Sadly brickwork to No 57 now painted white - lintels and sills in gloss black
- Bright red bricks to Pinmill Croft
- Common bricks to service/maintenance buildings - unattractive but well hidden
- Yellow/grey sandstone
  - On main house - cold and dirty - plinth, entrance porch, bay, facings, balustrades, lintels, chimney stacks, dressings - quoins, window eared architraves - string course on Gardener's Cottage
  - On Arts Centre central tower bay - clean - quoins, oculii, sills and general detailing
  - As finials on Park Court gables
- Applied artificial stucco - crude - painted bright yellow
  - On main house - eaves details, string courses, quoins, window eared architraves
- Painted render
  - Conspicuous cream on Thoresby (No 6) Fountain Lane
  - Warm cream roughcast on bowling green pavilion
  - Smooth cream on West facing walls of formal garden
- Buff clay - interesting - chimney pots
- Brick chimney stacks
  - South-East corner of main house
  - On outbuildings
  - On private residential properties
- Georgian (hornless) vertical sliding sash timber windows - in white - only on main house
  - Metal security bars to ground floor openings - some of which were formerly French Windows
  - Some white vertical sliding sashes to Park Lane dwellings
- Modern timber windows elsewhere - most are finished in brown - generally uninteresting except Park Court oculii
  - Some white PVCu to Fountain and Park Lane residential properties
  - White painted metal on Pinmill Croft
- Rainwater goods
  - Cast iron on majority of properties
    - main house - hopper dated 1852
- Plastic on bowling green pavilion and new Arts Centre courtyard units



**Main house chimneys and dated hopper-head**



- Ugly Council Chamber extension -
  - Flat roof with concrete parapet coping
  - Pale red/brown slop moulded bricks - some special angles - in lime mortar
  - Yellow cast concrete window reveals and aprons below glazing
  - Bland metal window frames
- Glazed conservatory
  - Poor timber facade - profiled stone plinth - brick back and flank walls
  - Glazed roof - broken panes - mechanical venting system
  - Decorated tiled floor
- Simple, glazed, timber-framed, slate roofed, single-storey, lean-to extension to East side and elevation of Arts Centre



**Front entrance porch of Main house**

- Arts Centre - formerly coach house -with prominent central clock tower bay



**Glazed lean-to Arts Centre extensions**

- Metalwork
  - Bowling green pavilion veranda railings - simple, modern, geometric
  - Various feature artwork gates
  - Cast iron urn on plinth in formal garden - over-painted
  - Galvanised roller-shutter doors and shutter-box to service/maintenance buildings
  - Poor quality profiled metal storage shed close to service/maintenance buildings
- Large block red/brown sandstone walls and copings to Fountain Lane properties



**Former coach house – now Arts Centre**

- Park Court - housing since 1984 - former C19<sup>th</sup> farm buildings - later Fire Station - feature of Fountain Lane area



**Park Court complex**

#### *4.4 Key buildings - listed and unlisted*

- No listed buildings
- Castle Park house - formerly Park Place - dominant feature at North end of area

- Glazed conservatory - focus within formal garden despite disrepair



**Semi-derelict conservatory**

#### *4.5 Interesting and unusual details*

- On main house
  - In stone
    - Carved tympanium with acroterion on porch - another tympanium to South elevation (unfortunately cut into to facilitate lowered window sill above)
    - Carved porch doorway spandrels
    - Banded rustication to porch openings
  - In stone and stucco
    - Quoins
    - Window eared architraves



**South-West façade of main house**

- Vertical timber-plank clad boiler flue added to North-West chimney stack
- On Arts Centre clock tower

- Cupola with weather-vane
- In sandstone
  - Wright family crest
  - Keyed oculus enclosing clock face
    - Stone pediment above
  - Quoins
  - Semi-circular door head arches



**Arts Centre clock tower**

- On Park Court
  - Alternating red and blue rubbed bricks and sandstone keys to oculi and arches
  - Brick corbels below window sills



**Park Court detailing**



- Timber eaves brackets to hooded porch roofs and North bay eaves of West elevation
- Brutal brick detailing - Fountain Lane elevation - mini-buttress piers at low level - corbelled out above - inverted stepped corbelled eaves to gables



**Park Court – brutal elevation to Fountain Lane**

- String courses
  - Stucco - on main house
  - Brick-work - multiple courses on Arts Centre
  - Brick-work - multiple courses with special moulded dentils to Nos 8 and 10 Fountain Lane
- Dentil courses
  - Timber - below eaves to main house
  - Stone - to porch and ground floor extensions on main house
  - Brick-work to
    - Oculii and below eaves on Park Court
    - Arts Centre clock tower
  - Brick-work - saw-tooth pattern to
    - Top of walls to derelict building in Upper Courtyard
    - Tops of chimneys to Nos 8 and 10 Fountain Lane
    - Sections of eaves to Fountain Lane elevation of Park Court
- Timber louvred ridge tower vents above roof-lines of Park Court and gardeners cottage (formerly laundry)
  - Latter held high level water tanks fed from Synagogue Well
- Timber eaves brackets to West elevation of North bay of Park Court



**Interesting Victorian detailing - Park Court gable**

- White gables with black geometric timber detailing to Nos 8 and 10 Fountain Lane
- Interesting modern black painted metal gates at Art Centre, garden for disabled and bowling green



**Modern artistic gates to the bowling green**

- Matched laser-cut metal deterrent top to wall adjacent to Arts Centre gates
- Garden for disabled - ramped paths and raised brick planting beds to rear of Arts Centre - but steps up from Arts Centre courtyard
- Cast iron urn on plinth in formal garden
- Lost details
  - From main house
    - Canopies over ground floor windows to South elevation
    - Balusters from above ground floor extension to South-West elevation
    - Brattishing above single storey extension to South-East corner
  - In American Garden
    - 'Mushroom seat' with its canopy

## 5. Street Scene

### 5.1 Street furniture, wirescape, water pumps/troughs

- Galvanised tall lamp posts in main car park and on driveway to main house
- Aluminium replica Victorian lampposts along North-Eastern section of main driveway - easily damaged
- Various styles of litterbins throughout Conservation Area
  - Many in poor condition
  - Occasionally found overflowing
  - Some of more recent cast iron bins incorporate Vale Royal insignia



Cast iron Vale Royal litter-bin

- Also dog-mess bins
- Assorted bollard styles
- Relatively few bench seats in park - cast iron ends with metal slats - metal picnic tables by main car park
- No wirescape issues

### 5.2 Shop fronts, advertisements

- Few businesses - small arts and crafts shop-units in Art Centre courtyard
  - No window displays of significance
  - Small wall mounted signs - no real impact

### 5.3 Landmarks and focal points with historic connection or visual interest

- Clock-tower cupola - an occasional focal point from East side of park



Clock tower visible over tennis courts from South

- Linear linked series from formal garden
  - Brick arch at entrance
  - Reproduction moulded, painted cast iron urn and plinth in centre



Reproduction urn – site of former fountain

- Disused stone fountain - beyond end of formal garden
- War Memorial/Cenotaph on Frodsham Hill - distant but significant focal point from various locations in area
- Main house - focal point looking North from woodland edge



#### 5.4 Floorscape – materials, colour and texture

- Fountain Lane and Park Lane have macadamised roads and footpaths
- Main park driveway - heavily potholed
  - Reinstated macadam - poor condition
  - Some stone raised edging remains - most is in pre-cast concrete
- Alongside access road off Fountain Lane
  - Stone housing to road drainage gully with cast iron top
  - Rope effect brown glazed tile edging and two rows of paving brick adjacent
    - Much of this detail missing or simply ignored and overlaid



Rope tile edging on access from Fountain Lane

- Modern pale red concrete rope effect edging sections recently used to define some flower borders in Formal Garden
- Main car park of compacted limestone hardcore bound by dust
  - Badly potholed - often water-filled
- Courtyard of Park Court - paved in more recent concrete block sets
- Remnant areas of cobbles - adjacent to Art Centre and in Upper courtyard
  - Arts Centre Courtyard has formal pattern of small element concrete paving slabs, concrete pavers and areas of cobble-stones unfortunately incorrectly set in cement mortar
- Access path leading across grassland from Netherton Drive consists of hoggin in-between timber edges - but surface has been washed away
- Path at back of Chester Road
  - Has red sandstone raised edging

- Bound limestone has been used in areas to repair eroded sections
- Macadam paths within park generally have pre-cast concrete edging
  - Those close to Howey Lane service road access have stone edgings
  - That to West of American Garden has rows of cobblestones - mostly covered by macadam
- Gravel paths are generally stone edged
  - Short flights of stone steps common
  - Public footpaths off Park Lane have soil residue from run-off from adjacent higher land
    - That South of orchard to Pinmill Croft has large smooth sandstone blocks at Park Lane end
- American Garden paths
  - Small brown gravel - resin-bound
  - Sandstone edges with adjacent drainage channels - usually in clay tile - sometimes stone or concrete
  - Issue of leaf-mould build-up on paths



Drainage channel along path sides

## LANDSCAPE

### 6. Landscape setting

- Site of earliest formal settlement in area
  - Adjacent to main Chester/Warrington (Roman) road
  - At foot of wooded sandstone hills
  - Just below 'spring line'
  - Just elevated above open marshes of Mersey estuary
  - Now separated from mediaeval planned town by railway embankment



## 7. Green spaces, trees, hedges

- Castle Park – planted and landscaped - now mature 'registered' historic garden
  - Has four distinct areas - three green spaces - one wooded
- Gardens and pleasure grounds around main house
  - Flat grassland area used for informal play especially ball games - close to main house
  - Formal garden - East of main house - geometric pattern of bedding plants - conservatory



Formal garden to East of house

- Formal games area - on land formerly occupied by kitchen garden and orchard - to North-East of park
  - Tennis courts constructed in former kitchen garden area
  - Bowling Green constructed on parts of a former adjacent orchard



Bowling green and pavilion

- Open area of former pasture - later parkland - to South of park
  - Also used as sports field and football pitch
  - Tree covered mound to South - metal railings surround manhole cover to underground reservoir
  - 'Flagpole hill' - no longer obvious
- Wooded American Garden to South-East
  - Wooded area - informally planted with trees and rhododendrons
    - Irregular ground levels - laid out with winding intersecting stone edged paths - with side drainage channels - short flights of stone steps connect varying levels



Restoration of steps in American Garden

- In West of area - paths and drainage lead to sunken area - recently restored stone lined pond or small reservoir
- Whole of Eastern part includes linear feature water-course



Path adjacent to linear water-course



- Orchard now grazed field by Pinmill Croft
- Grassed Town Council play area - corner of Fountain Lane/Prince Way



**Fountain Lane play area**

- Park has many mature trees, many of which are over mature
  - Woodland belt on rising ground to South of grassland and play area - West of American Garden - consists of broadleaved, evergreen and coniferous species including Oak, Birch, Beech, Holly and Yew
    - Since 2000 - programme of woodland management including succession planting in place
    - Squirrels cause damage to bark
    - Trees growing into old - long since irrelevant - metal tree guards



**Obsolete tree guard**

- Number of exotic species in park - includes Walnut, Swamp Cypress, Dawn Redwood, Maidenhair tree and Monkey Puzzle

- American Garden noted above - has rhododendrons – being restored 2003
- Interesting circular copse of trees - planted between 1870 and 1898 - enclosed within metal post and bar railings - rear of No 46 Howey Lane
- Many mature trees including older specimen trees to North-West of grassland by main driveway
- Numerous holly hedges of assorted height, length and condition throughout whole of park
- Hedges - hawthorn and mixed deciduous - line most of park's Southern boundary

## **8. Water features**

- “Gushing water” from land springs was originally used for water features
  - System of buried pipes (now lost) fed water features and fountains
- Drainage in marshes to North-West of Frodsham reduced the water table in the area of Castle Park
- Significant watercourse through East of parkland – littered and untidy
  - Flows from pipe below Howey Lane – upper reaches are wild, overgrown and badly littered – some stone blocks may be evidence of previous watercourse management
  - Stone walled Synagogue Well (reservoir) no longer operational



**Synagogue Well - disused cistern**

- Second water course along park boundary with Nos 38 and 40 Howey Lane now dry

- Generally lined with coursed and dressed stone - topped with irregular smooth edged stones to give a more natural effect
- Heavy erosion with exposed tree root presence along its length



**Tree roots along Eastern watercourse**

- Simple stone slab bridges
- Series of low stone weirs
- Falling leaves and branches also accumulating and blocking water course
- Mud accumulating along bottom of water course
- Stone lined pond in American Garden recently restored from former neglected and boggy habitat



**Recently restored pond in American Garden**

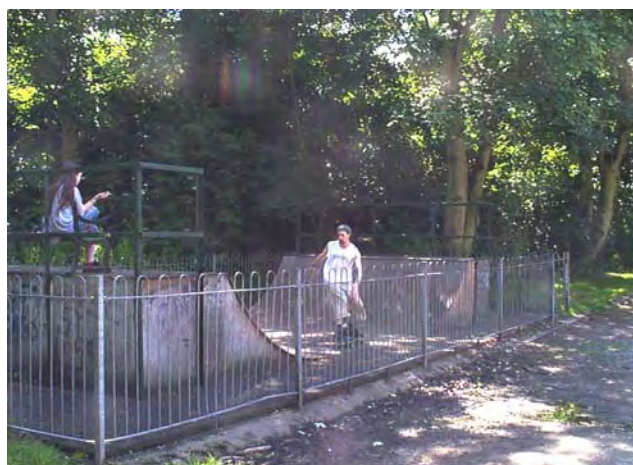
- Capped well to East of pond in American Garden
- Former large (ornamental) fish pond to West of grounds - reduced area in North now a car park

- 1910 Ordnance Survey shows pond fed by smaller pool to South East – also - due South - on higher land - a possible circular (underground) reservoir that remains today
- Stone sluice gate structure remains at Northern end of car park
- On Eastern side – remains of former stone footbridge – incorporated into stone access to children's play area
- Former water features
  - Low moulded stone circular base at centre of formal garden - now site of cast iron urn on plinth floral feature
  - Low moulded stone three-quarter circular base - at South end - large stone former fountain monolith with curved top and moulded edges - to South of formal garden

## **OTHERS**

### **9. Negative factors**

- Turning movements of traffic trying to negotiate recently installed traffic management system on main driveway
- Parking problems - lack of sufficient spaces leads to potentially dangerous parking along main drive by house
- Continual background noise from M56 - particularly noticeable in peaceful setting of Castle Park
- Occasional noise from railway – goods trains especially
- Repetitive grinding noise from skateboarding ramp



**Skateboard ramp by main car park**



- Inconsiderate treatment of main house - has left its appearance untidy
  - Ugly fire escape to North-West elevation
  - Razor wire along flat roof edges
  - Lack of consideration when applying cables to main building walls - untidy assortments visible externally
  - Overbearing security bars on ground floor windows
  - Lost detailing on main house
  - South-West elevation ruined by unsympathetic mid C20<sup>th</sup> Council Chamber extension



**Main house from South**

- Conservatory in formal garden - in need of restoration – much of original detailing especially to roof now lost
- Collapsed fence by Synagogue Well - despite attempts at reinforcement - under increasing pressure from adjacent residential compost heap at higher level



**Compost heap pressure on fence near to Synagogue Well**

- Garden waste - applying pressure to original metal railings along Eastern boundary of Park
- Path at back of Chester Road - worn down considerably
  - Manhole covers now raised creating trip hazards
  - Roots of large old self sewn tree have intruded into body of path
  - Red sandstone edging missing in many places along this path
  - Concrete post and chain-link fence across path at foot of railway embankment - appears to serve no purpose - in an untidy and vandalised condition
- Buildings in Upper Courtyard adjacent to Arts Centre - in poor and dangerous state of disrepair
  - Missing steps leading up to closed gate to Formal Garden - giving access to dangerous unmanaged void underneath higher level



**Upper courtyard void behind former steps**

- Poor visual quality of service/ maintenance buildings and their immediate environment
- Management issues to be addressed
  - Public perception that park is unsafe at night due to abuse by youths
  - Access to bowling green pavilion and toilets on busy days
  - Repair of damaged features
  - Trim trail - vandalised and neglected



- Small raised bed on South-West corner of Council Chamber - not always part of planting programme
- Overgrown nature of vegetation in Garden for Disabled
- External lights on during daylight
- Overflowing and poor condition of some litter bins

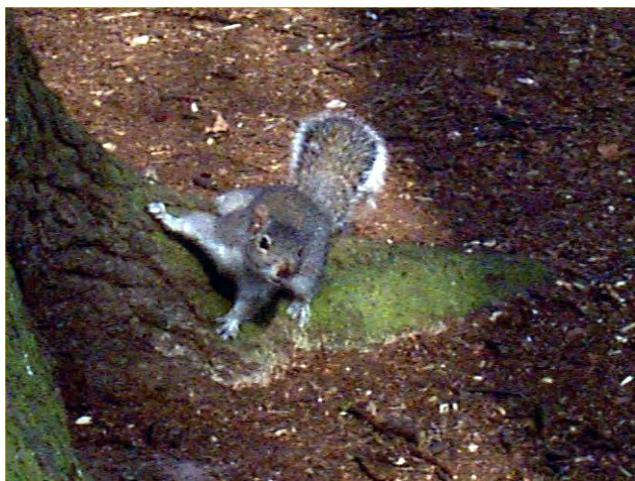


**Overflowing bin in Formal Garden**

- Poor quality pointing of stonework to wall adjacent to abutments of Fountain Lane railway bridge

## **10. Neutral areas**

### **10.1 *Areas which neither enhance or detract from the character or appearance of the area***

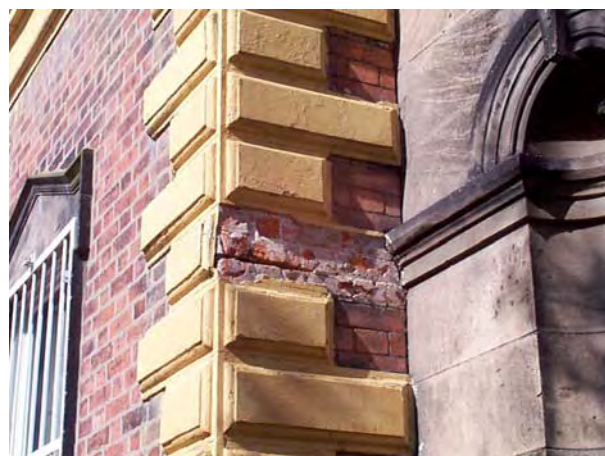


**Squirrel – popular nuisances**

- Squirrels - attractive to public but cause damage to trees
- Children's play area - intrusive within historic context but essential in modern park – but is reversible and re-locatable
- Tennis courts/Bowling Green
- Pinmill Croft on Park Lane - modern mid C20<sup>th</sup> dwelling of no special significance

### **10.2 *Areas and opportunities for development and/or enhancement***

- Whole site requires sensitive restoration, improvement, management and supervision
- Missing applied stucco quoins, dentil course work, balusters, window canopies and brattishing to main house could be reinstated - with razor wire removed



**Missing stucco detail on Castle Park house**

- Derelict buildings in upper courtyard adjacent to Arts Centre could be restored and brought into an appropriate use



**Upper courtyard buildings with potential**



- Sensitive resurfacing of driveway and main car park - replacing current untidy and badly potholed surfaces - issues under consideration in 2003
  - But potential exists to enlarge and enhance car park to follow plan form of original ornamental fish pond - reinstating its edges
  - Detailed edging to access road from Fountains Lane could be uncovered and restored
- Address most of issues in Section 9
- Introduce a programme of interpretation

## 11. Ambience/Uniqueness

### 11.1 Sounds and smells

- Road and railway traffic noise
- Children at play especially in play area
- Wildlife - squirrels and birds foraging amongst leaves
- Sounds associated with use of skateboarding ramp
- Bell from clock in Arts Centre tower chimes on hour
- Strong smell of wild garlic in valley path between railway embankment and main house
- Unpleasant odour rising from stagnant water in and around southern end of main car park and stepped access to children's play area
- Smell of slurry from nearby pig farm especially bad in warm weather

### 11.2 Vitality and vibrance of the area

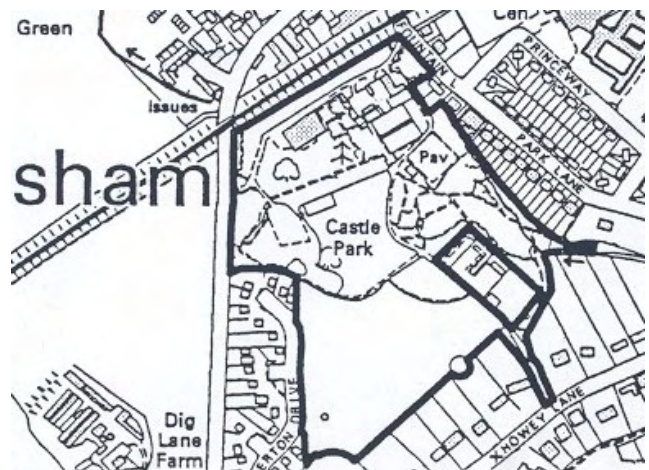


**A typical day of recreation**

- A busy and attractive park throughout the year - especially popular with young families
- Described as a "Magical Place"

### 11.3 Historical associations with unusual crafts, famous people and events

- Synagogue Well mythology relates its foundation by a wandering Jew to a time when the Castle and Keep were in 'glory'
- Park Place created by Ashleys
  - Developed by Victorian industrialists - Stubs and Wright
- Important landscape by Edward Kemp
  - Described in his book "How To Lay Out A Garden" - 1858
  - Design of small scale elements within Park Place influenced by Kemp's visits to Biddulph Grange
- Watercourse in East formerly had footpath adjacent to facilitate access between main house and St. Lawrence's Church
- Castle Park was donated to local authority for benefit of local residents - 1933 and subsequently extended
  - Now registered as an historic park



**Boundary of registered historic park**

- Former Lodge and access to Park Place (now Castle Park) off Fountain Lane - built on land acquired from Birkenhead Lancashire and Cheshire Junction Railway Company
  - Railway bridge aligned to facilitate main driveway to former Park Place

- Properties now forming Park Court and Nos 8 and 10 Fountain Lane - built on former exchanged 'Glebe' land
- Nos 53 to 59 Park Lane - built as 'Glebe' cottages
- Park - venue for Anglo/Irish Friendship Games in 1996
- Park also venue for annual July "Festival in the Park" since early 1990's

#### *11.4 Other characteristics which make the area unique*

- Contiguous with two other conservation areas - Frodsham Town and Overton
- Only private parkland garden in Borough converted to public park use

*Whilst an appraisal aims to identify the essential elements that give an area its character, it can only be a 'snapshot' in time. Elements and details of an area may be important even if they are not specifically referred to in the document.*

*This document should be read in conjunction with "Conservation Area Appraisals", produced by Vale Royal Borough Council in July 1997.*

**Frodsham Conservation Area was designated by Cheshire County Council on 25 July 1973 and extended by Vale Royal District Council on 17 November 1973. Overton Conservation Area was designated by Vale Royal District Council on 8 April 1976.**

**This appraisal relates to the Frodsham (Castle Park Locality) Conservation Area. This was designated by Vale Royal Borough Council on 9 October 2003 and was formed by consolidating and extending certain areas from the above two earlier designations.**

Based on the official description of Castle Park by Helen Thomas on behalf of English Heritage, a brief survey by Robyn Wolley and work by the Frodsham and District Local History Group

Frodsham (Castle Park Locality)  
Conservation Area Appraisal  
(one of a series to be produced)

Revised after public consultation  
VRBC Cons 36/X                      Sept 2003

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Key Views



Conservation Area Boundary  
Key buildings

1:1700

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