



Historic England

# Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management

Historic England Advice Note 1 (Second Edition)





# Summary

This revised advice note supports the management of change in a way that conserves and enhances the character and appearance of historic areas through conservation area appraisal, designation and management. This 2nd edition updates the advice in light of the publication of the 2018 National Planning Policy Framework and gives more information on the relationship with local and neighbourhood plans and policies. It is also slightly re-ordered, to underline the staged approach to the appraisal, designation and management of conservation areas, while continuing to offer advice on managing conservation areas so that the potential of historic areas worthy of protection is fully realised. It has also been updated to give more information on innovative ways of handling conservation appraisals, particularly community involvement beyond consultation, character assessment and digital presentation.

This Historic England Advice note supersedes Historic England Advice Note 1: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management, first edition (2016).

This document has been prepared by Dr Richard Morrice of Historic England. It is one of a series of Historic England Advice Notes.

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# 1

# Introduction

**1** The purpose of this Historic England Advice Note is to provide information on conservation area appraisal, designation and management to assist local authorities, planning and other consultants, owners, applicants and other interested parties in implementing historic environment legislation, the policy in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the related guidance given in the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). In addition to these documents, this advice should be read in conjunction with the relevant Good Practice Advice and Historic England Advice Notes. Alternative approaches may be equally acceptable, provided they are demonstrably compliant with legislation and national policy objectives.

**2** The advice in this document emphasises that evidence required to inform decisions affecting a conservation area, including both its designation and management, should be proportionate to the importance of the asset. It also follows the government's recommended approach to conserving and enhancing heritage assets, as set out in the NPPF. It gives particular attention to identifying opportunities where conservation can help to deliver wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits and where there may be opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place. These approaches conform with the statutory duty of local planning authorities with regards to conservation areas, and in particular with the requirement to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area.

**3** The contribution that historic areas make to our quality of life is widely recognised: around 10,000 conservation areas have been designated. They are a link to the past that can give us a sense of continuity and stability and they have the reassurance of the familiar which can provide a point of reference in a rapidly changing world. The way building traditions and settlement patterns are superimposed and survive over time will be unique to the townscape of each area. This local distinctiveness can provide a catalyst for regeneration and inspire well designed new development which brings economic and social benefits valued by both local planning authorities and local communities.

**4** Change is inevitable, and often beneficial, and this advice sets out ways to manage change in a way that conserves and enhances the character and appearance of historic areas. Conservation areas can contribute to sustainable development in all its three dimensions as outlined in the NPPF. However, 512 conservation areas were recorded as ‘at risk’ by local planning authorities in Historic England’s national survey in 2017 through pressure for inappropriate new development, vacancy, decay or damage (the gathering of local authority information on conservation areas at risk has provided information on over 80% of conservation areas in England).

**5** While the number of wholly new conservation areas designated has now declined to just a handful each year, and is unlikely to rise significantly in the immediate future, the consideration of appraisal, designation, management and review of conservation areas (as summarised in [paragraph 9](#) below) is described from first principles in this advice to ensure that the full process is addressed.

## Conservation areas in statute and policy

**6** The provisions for conservation area designation and management are set out in legislation. Government planning policy (as explained in the National Planning Policy Framework) and Government guidance (as described in the Planning Practice Guidance) provide further context:

### Conservation Area requirements under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

The following gives a summary of the main requirements – the links give the detail of each provision

- Local planning authorities to determine areas which it is desirable to preserve and enhance, and designate them as conservation areas ([section 69 \[1\]](#))
- Local planning authorities to review their past activities in this area, including existing conservation areas, and to add more conservation areas ([section 69 \[2\]](#))
- Local planning authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas and consult the public in the area in question, taking account of views expressed ([section 71 \[1 and 2\]](#))
- In the exercise by local planning authorities of planning functions within the conservation area ‘special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area’ ([section 72 \[1\]](#))

## Town and Country Planning Act 1990

- Offence of failing to obtain planning permission for demolition of unlisted, etc, buildings in conservation areas in England ([section 196D](#))

## NPPF policies and PPG guidance on conservation areas include the following:

### NPPF

- In designating conservation areas, local planning authorities to ensure that an area has sufficient special architectural or historic interest not to devalue the concept of conservation ([paragraph 186](#))
- Local planning authorities to look for opportunities for new development within conservation areas 'to enhance or better reveal their significance' ([paragraph 200](#))
- 'Not all elements of a ..... Conservation Area ... will necessarily contribute to its significance. Loss of a building (or other element) which makes a positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area ..... should be treated either as substantial harm under paragraph 195 or less than substantial harm under paragraph 196, as appropriate, taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the Conservation Area ..... as a whole' ([paragraph 201](#)).

### NPPF Glossary

- Designated heritage asset: A World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation ([NPPF Glossary](#)).

### PPG

- Do local planning authorities need to review conservation areas? ([Paragraph: 025 Reference ID: 18a-025-20140306](#))
- Is an application for planning permission required to carry out works to an unlisted building in a conservation area? ([Paragraph: 047 Reference ID: 18a-047-20140306](#))
- What about harm in relation to conservation areas? ([Paragraph: 018 Reference ID: 18a-018-20140306](#))

## Protection offered by designation

7 Conservation area designation introduces some additional controls over the way owners can alter or develop their properties. However, owners of residential properties generally consider these controls to be beneficial because they also sustain, and/or enhance, the value of property within it. This has been confirmed by research by the London School of Economics; see G Ahlfeldt, N Holman and N Wendland, [An Assessment of the effects of Conservation Areas on Value](#), London School of Economics, 2012.

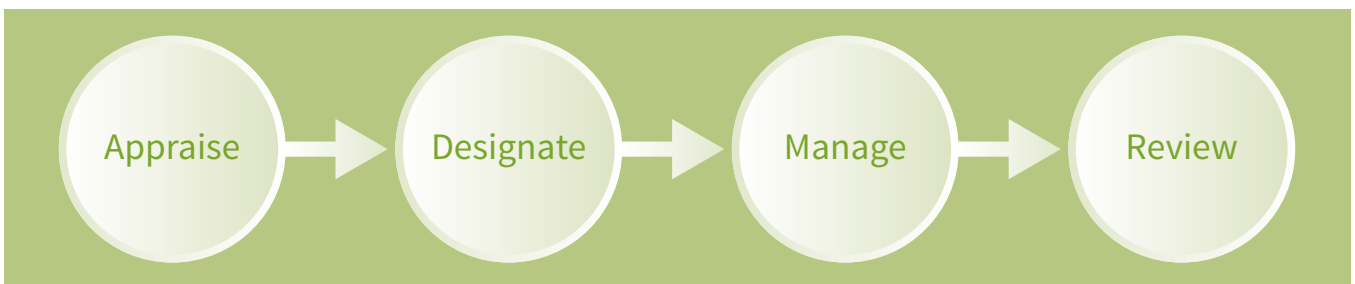
8 These controls include:

- the requirement in legislation and national planning policies to preserve and/or enhance, as discussed further in the NPPF and the PPG
- local planning policies which pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area
- control over demolition of unlisted buildings
- control over works to trees
- limitations on the types of advertisements which can be displayed with deemed consent
- restriction on the types of development which can be carried out without the need for planning permission (permitted development rights)
- support for the use of article 4 directions to remove permitted development rights where avoidable damage is occurring
- clarification of archaeological interest, thereby assisting its protection



## A staged approach to appraisal, designation and management

**9** All designation and management of assets, whether large or small, within the historic environment is based on a staged approach, starting with understanding the significance of the affected assets, before moving on to understanding possible impacts on that significance, then seeking to avoid, minimise and mitigate those impacts and pursuing opportunities to better reveal or enhance significance, then ensuring any unavoidable harmful impacts are justifiable by public benefits that are necessary and otherwise undeliverable. This staged approach is reflected in the sequence in which conservation area management is best approached, although there will be circumstances where individual stages may be by-passed or narrowed:



**10** Conservation area designation is undertaken to recognise the historic character of an area and/or in answer to the impact of development, neglect and other threats, on areas which are considered to have special architectural or historic interest. The appraisal is the vehicle for understanding both the significance of an area and the effect of those impacts bearing negatively on its significance. It will form part of the local planning authority's Historic Environment Record and will be part of the evidence base for the local plan and a material consideration in planning decisions.

**11** However, prior to appraisal, there is likely to be a stage when a decision would need to be taken as to the significance of an area and the likelihood of conservation area designation addressing relevant problems within the area. This is unlikely to be a lengthy process, the purpose being to consider whether an area has:

- a) sufficient architectural or historic interest for the area to be considered 'special'?
- b) whether this is experienced through its character or appearance? and
- c) whether it is desirable for that character or appearance to be preserved or enhanced, and what problems designation could help to solve.

**12** The management plan is a vehicle for reinforcing the positive character of a historic area as well as for avoiding, minimising and mitigating negative impacts identified as affecting the area. This may also outline opportunities to better reveal or enhance significance, possibly through the location or design of new development. In some circumstances the proposals for the successful management of the conservation area could inform the development plan.

**13** Finally, it is a statutory requirement for local planning authorities from time to time to review their conservation areas; this will need to refer back to the appraisal and the management plan, particularly where the review suggests that designation might be needed for areas along the borders of a conservation area which would benefit from designation. The process is therefore one which needs some measure of continuing re-appraisal though the need will be proportionate to development pressures inside and outside the conservation area. This advice follows this staged process but be aware of the usefulness of viewing the process pragmatically.

# 2

## Identifying potential conservation areas

**14** New conservation areas or areas that might be suitable as extensions to an existing designated area may be identified in a number of ways, including:

- historic characterisation studies for master-planning and as part of evidence collection for the local development plan
- local communities working on neighbourhood plans identifying areas which have a special interest and character or appearance possibly meriting consideration for designation by the local planning authority
- stand-alone studies of particular areas in response to development proposals, pressures for change or new awareness of significance through processes such as local listing

**15** The NPPF cautions local planning authorities to ensure that an area justifies designation as a conservation area because of its special architectural or historic interest, so that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest.

**16** Having determined that an area may meet the definition in the Act, it is good practice to prepare a designation assessment to formally assess the special historic or architectural interest it may have and whether it is desirable to preserve or enhance its character or appearance. It is helpful to consider these as separate criteria (see [paragraph 11](#) above). This often follows a similar format to a conservation area appraisal and, indeed where this leads to designation it will inform future decision-making. Nevertheless, where a rapid designation is necessary to prevent harm and where proportionate consideration is given in decision-making, the special interest is relatively clear or the area has an easily defined boundary, it may be expedient to prepare a shorter report setting out how the area meets the statutory definition and how the appropriate boundary has been determined, thus ensuring the area's designation is robust.

# 3

## How to appraise conservation areas

**17** A character appraisal defines the special interest of the conservation area that merits its designation and describes and evaluates the contribution made by the different features of its character and appearance.

### Benefits of appraisal

**18** A character appraisal of the conservation area will have the following enduring benefits:

- Those considering investment in the area for new development, including developers, planners, Council members, the Planning Inspectorate and Secretary of State, are able to assess the impact of proposals on the area's special interest, character and appearance. The appraisal will be a material consideration in decisions affecting the area
- The area's special interest is clearly demonstrated allowing robust analysis of the impact of proposals on its significance
- Opportunities to build and understand consensus on the character that it is desirable to preserve or enhance are taken, which can be used to inform robust planning decisions
- The local community is empowered to explore the sense of their place and express what they value about the place in which they live and work, providing an informative resource for decision-making, neighbourhood-planning and educational use
- Communities are alerted to the cumulative effects of minor change on an area's character and how they can contribute to maintaining and enhancing that character
- Management proposals for the preservation or enhancement of the area will be informed by an understanding of positive features to preserve, negative features to be enhanced, and risks to the area's character or appearance through decay, neglect or other threats. This will help to identify necessary actions, such as additional protection and restraints (including the use of Article 4 directions) or support through intervention or partnership working

- The archaeological interest of the area is better understood, perhaps by identifying and mapping archaeologically sensitive areas, thus helping to guide development towards less sensitive locations
- Potential Assets of Community Value which might usefully be recognised under the Localism Act 2011 and the Assets of Community Value (England) Regulations 2012 and for their possible current (recent) and realistic future use for the social well-being or social interest of the local community are identified – see Historic England advice on Assets of Community Value
- Potential Local Green Spaces are identified that should receive protection under the NPPF as demonstrably special because of their historic significance, local character and proximity to the community who value them – see Historic England advice on Local Green Space

## Undertaking the appraisal

**19** Ideally, an appraisal will have been prepared before a conservation area's designation or extension to inform the designation process. Even after designation, undertaking an appraisal will provide an important body of knowledge to inform the area's on-going management. The appraisal can be reviewed regularly as part of the management of the conservation area, and can be used to develop a management plan that responds to the area's significance and issues. Management plans may be set out as part of the appraisal but, where development pressures are more intense, are better set out separately.

**20** Appraisals are often prepared by local planning authorities but partnership with local communities and local community bodies is increasingly being found useful in such work, with careful briefing and training. Funding may be available from community grant sources, ward community chest funds, local planning authority (LPA) sources such as the Community Infrastructure Levy, Historic England grants, the Heritage Lottery Fund and other sources.

**21** Carrying out the appraisal need not be an overly long or costly task. The objective is to understand and articulate exactly why the area is special and what elements within the area contribute to this special quality and which do not, conveying this succinctly and in plain English, accessible to all users.

**22** With scarce resources it may be better to be flexible in carrying out a greater number of appraisals in a combined document rather than in exhaustive detail for one conservation area (see [text box](#) on Craven DC conservation area assessment project, after paragraph 31). On the other hand, both the Cambridge Historic Core Conservation Area Appraisal and the York Central Historic Core Conservation Area Appraisal provide models for appraising large and complex urban conservation areas. They break down analysis into conservation area-wide issues documents, supplemented by numerous mini character appraisals of small character areas or individual

streets. These provide sufficient detail for decision making, as well as being accessible to those needing to use them. Such combined documents have the following advantages:

- streamlining the assessment of the area's special interest, particularly where a group of similar areas share architectural features or history
- allowing repeating elements, such as guidance for property owners and legal implications of designation to be produced only once
- enabling similar conservation areas where development opportunities need to be guided or which are threatened by similar and/or generic development pressures to be assessed collectively

## Survey and research

**23** Undertaking a visual survey of the conservation area is a fundamental part of understanding those elements of character or appearance that are desirable to preserve or enhance. An assessor will need to give consideration as to how they record their impressions of the area and how they determine what contributes positively to its character or appearance (and in particular how these features are connected with the area's special interest) and what detracts from it or presents an opportunity for enhancement.

### **The Oxford Character Assessment Toolkit**

This **toolkit** was produced by Oxford City Council with funding from Historic England and is intended for use by community bodies, planners and developers, to understand the character of historic areas. It uses a check-list of environmental features to create a guided survey of how each contributes to an area's character under five main headings – spaces, buildings, landscape, views and ambience – with a scoring mechanism to show the relative positive or negative contributions of each feature. Detailed assessment forms use a staged process of initial reaction, detailed survey and review of findings to provide an evaluation from which a formal character assessment can be written. A shorter 'rapid assessment form' is available for use as assessors become more confident.

Whilst it has been used in Oxford to support collaboration between the local planning authority and community organisations to produce conservation area appraisals, the methodology has been adapted to create locally specific toolkits by planning authorities and community groups elsewhere. The need for a comprehensive approach to townscape and landscape is ideally suited to the locally-specific approach of this kind of toolkit.

**24** It is recommended that assessors make several visits to experience the area at different times of day and in different weather conditions as these can make a significant difference to experience of the sense of place, including impacts of traffic. Differences in leaf cover between summer and winter can impact on sensations of noise and tranquillity, openness and enclosure and the appreciation of views of features within the area or between the area and its setting. It is also a common experience to find that assessors respond more positively to an area's character in warm, sunny weather. Keeping a photographic archive of the area is important for documenting the condition of the area and features within it at the time of survey and can be of great value in supporting decision-making or other actions to manage the area in future.

**25** Research will usually be needed to develop understanding of the area's historic and architectural interest. However, it is unlikely that extensive study of primary (archival) documentary evidence will be required, as in most cases, the history of an area will already be recorded in secondary sources. Particular sources of evidence that might be useful include:

- **local history studies** or the Victoria County Histories normally available from the 'local studies' section of larger local libraries
- **architectural reviews** such as the Buildings of England series (often referred to as Pevsner Guides) are very useful as studies of the architectural interest of an area including details of the architecture of both listed and unlisted buildings
- **historic area assessments, character studies** and the local **Historic Environment Record** provide more focused information prepared for planning that normally represent a synthesis of evidence about particular areas, buildings or places
- **historic photographs and maps** (including the Ordnance Survey 'county series', tithe and enclosure maps), will provide key primary sources that provide a rapidly accessible record of how the area's physical character and use has changed over a period of at least 200 years. These are normally available from the local record office, whilst some may be accessible online

**26** Further information on using these sources can be found in section 4.4 of [Understanding Place: Historic Area Assessments](#) (Historic England, 2017)

**27** Map regression (comparing successive historic maps, including the Ordnance Survey sequence) is a starting point for historical analysis, and archaeological and urban geographical methods can help to reconstruct the earlier stages of historical development, often still influencing the current townscape (paragraph 2.4.2 of [Understanding Place: Historic Area Assessments](#) gives useful sample questions about the historic development of an area). The following questions will be of particular relevance to assessing the historic interest of an area:

- Does the area have a particularly notable, distinctive or unique historic association or connection for which it is well known and that has influenced its character or appearance?
- What is the age or origin of the present land/townscape's dominant character? How does this vary across the area and does it reflect particular land uses (past and present)?
- Does the area provide evidence of even earlier periods of use even if now only fragmentary?
- What has been the influence of landscape-wide developments such as communication routes (roads, railways, canal and river navigations, etc), industrial exploitation or strategic consideration for military functions, on the area's development?
- Does the area represent or illustrate national or regional themes in social and economic history, such as developments in employment, landownership, trade, administration and religious or civic life?
- What is the contribution of the area's aspect, geology and physical relief to its development and character, including building traditions and economy?
- Has the area been influenced by formal planning and how does this affect the density, types and forms of buildings, gardens, green spaces and streets?
- What other factors have influenced the character and architectural interest of the building stock, whether as examples of locally distinct vernacular traditions, buildings representing designs for particular uses, or as interesting or innovative examples of national styles?
- What impact have later phases of activity had on the historic or architectural interest of the area either by adding to or removing elements that contribute to special interest or that effect the desirability of preserving or enhancing its character or appearance?



## Community and owner consultation and involvement

**28** Local planning authorities usually take the lead in appraising and reviewing conservation areas, using appropriately qualified and experienced staff or advisors. However, by consulting local communities and owners on new designations, and when appraising and reviewing conservation areas (obviously important in achieving support), consideration can be given to relevant information that either might present, helping to ensure decisions are robust. Local communities and owners will also be helpful in providing proactive assistance in identifying the general areas that merit conservation area status and defining the boundaries. Neighbourhood forums and town/parish councils are also sometimes commissioning appraisals as part of neighbourhood planning. They can therefore add depth and a new perspective to the local authority view. Communities can also:

- undertake a great deal of the survey work to identify features that contribute either positively or negatively to the area's character or appearance, particularly where appraisals are initiated by local groups
- from their survey data, they can help the local authority develop a full appraisal in draft form
- carry out conservation area reviews (see [paragraphs 104-6](#)), raise awareness locally of conservation area designation and celebrate the special interest of their area

## Presentation

**29** Appraisals need to be easy for decision-makers to access, understand and navigate. Brevity is also essential in allowing decision-makers to access information rapidly, whilst use of headings and subheadings will draw their attention to key information. Consider using bullet points to identify the key features of the area's historic or architectural interest and those aspects of character or appearance considered most essential to preserve or enhance.

**30** Graphic presentation (including maps and other annotated images) is both immediate and more accessible for users; it usually results in a more succinct document and, through the use of GIS, is ideally suited for digital production. Where issues cannot easily be presented graphically, complementary text is necessary. Other forms of presentation might include annotated photographs or drawings of buildings and characteristic local details. We recommend including maps or sketches to illustrate each of the areas of special interest and their character analysis with the sections on content below (see [section 4](#)).

**31** Some authorities, such as the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, have developed their own templates to use which can be a useful tool when carrying out a number of appraisals over a short time: see [Farfield Mill conservation area appraisal](#). Dover District Council has also prepared a

template to be used by community groups, including the Deal Society, when drafting community-led appraisals on behalf of the Council (see [Deal Society Conservation Area Appraisal Toolkit](#)).

Digital presentation, as in the case of sixteen conservation area appraisals in Craven District – see [Craven Conservation Areas Assessment Project: General Introduction](#) and its individual appraisals - can be economic both in outlay and output. A combined introduction document provides an overview of the special interest of the areas, whilst each conservation area is then reviewed through a short assessment to identify key features, with a focused assessment of development potential of open spaces within or outside each conservation area, including impacts on the settings of conservation areas and views. These very proportionate appraisals are accompanied by a PDF map with selectable layer views providing an annotated assessment of the contribution of open space(s) with hyperlinks to text sections describing each area’s contribution and sensitivity to change. Development management staff in a local planning authority can thus rapidly access an understanding of the contribution of spaces to each conservation area, with the Local Plan reinforced by providing a comprehensive assessment of the sensitivity of land for large housing allocations in or near these conservation areas.

**32** Working with community groups, including both residents and businesses during the preparation of an appraisal will help to reduce potential need for significant amendments to the draft document later. Having prepared a draft, it is normal practice to publish this on the council’s website, as well as making copies available in public spaces such as the council’s office and a library local to the conservation area. Accompanied by a comments sheet/ feedback form, this provides an opportunity to gain community feedback and highlight any concerns with the appraisal before it is too far advanced to exclude further influence on the outcome. Whilst it is not required by legislation or planning policy, councils may also consider holding meetings, exhibitions or ‘surgeries’ at a public place within the conservation area as an opportunity for the public to meet officers and ask questions about the appraisal or designation process and implications, directly.

**33** Where consultation is undertaken it is good practice to prepare a report explaining:

- how community involvement and public consultation has been undertaken
- how the input from the community was evaluated; and
- how it has influenced the final appraisal document and the recommendations

## The assessment of special interest

**34** Conservation areas are designated for both special architectural and historic interest and most areas worthy of designation will have both, though the levels may vary and one may be considered more important than another. The appraisal needs to set out these interests and express their importance clearly. Key elements in defining the special interest are likely to be:

- the still-visible effects/impact of the area's historic development on its plan form, townscape, character and architectural style and social/historic associations and the importance of that history
- architectural quality and built form, including any particular architectural interest resulting from a past use, planning or design, important phases of development, the integrity or group value of buildings or provision of a record of development over time through the architectural record
- the contribution to the special interest made by the setting on the area, that is what the setting can contribute to the significance of a heritage asset, and how it can allow that significance to be appreciated (see [Historic England Good Practice Advice 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets, 2nd edition](#)).
- local distinctiveness and a sense of place which make the area unique, including the influence of sources of building materials and historic industries that have come to contribute significantly to the area's present identity
- how the places within it are experienced by the people who live and work there and visitors to the area (including both daily and seasonal variations if possible)
- the design, planting or past use of open spaces, green areas, parks and gardens, and trees, including the representation of particular species or varieties that reflect key periods of horticultural interest, collecting or design
- designated and other heritage assets, their intrinsic importance and the contribution they make to the townscape – this will normally provide an indication of past recognition of special interest, whilst a focus of assets of a similar type may suggest the area as a whole has a particular special interest

**35** Though some conservation areas are made up largely or even entirely of twentieth century development (eg Letchworth and Welwyn Garden City), the twentieth century is often the most undervalued and vulnerable period of building and landscaping and it will be important for the appraisal to recognise, where appropriate, the contribution made by more recent buildings.

## Adoption

**36** Following consultation and revision of the appraisal and the resulting management proposals to take account of public responses, they can be adopted formally in accordance with the local authority's internal procedures (many authorities find a brief summary sheet for each conservation area a useful addition to the full document). Adoption need not be an onerous process and could be achieved through formal endorsement according to local procedures.

**37** Some authorities have adopted appraisals and management plans as Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) (eg [Tunbridge Wells](#)), whereas others regard the appraisal itself as part of the evidence base for the Local Plan. Planning inspectors have accepted appraisals as material considerations of considerable weight in appeals whether or not they have been adopted as SPD. Where both the Local Plan and conservation area appraisals are presented digitally, links can be provided between the Plan and appraisals.

# 4

## Content of conservation area appraisals

**38** The content suggested below can be adapted to suit local circumstances always bearing in mind the need to be proportionate in balancing understanding with evaluation and should be used selectively based on the particular interest and character of the conservation area.

### The statement (or summary) of special interest

**39** This section of the document presents the most pertinent information to inform decision-makers and should, as far as possible, encapsulate what is different when considering proposals affecting the conservation area compared with anywhere else. It is the most important element of the document and will probably be the last part prepared, following completion of the analysis of the area's historic and architectural interest and character or appearance. Nevertheless presenting it at the opening of the document gives it prominence and ease of access. While it can stand alone as a guide for decision-makers, subsequent sections of the appraisal will add detail and explain the considerations that have informed its preparation. It will normally set out:

- A concise statement defining the special historic or architectural interest of the area and the character or appearance that it is desirable to preserve or enhance so that this can be taken into account in decision-making
- It could include bullet points or a table to identify individual features or characteristics that contribute positively to the conservation area's character or appearance and how these relate to the special interest, in order to make this information readily accessible to decision-makers
- It is helpful to set out separate lists or tables detailing issues or vulnerabilities identified as affecting the area's character or appearance, as well as any management proposals that are recommended
- If character areas or zones have been identified these will be described in detail and the special interest of each area evaluated further on in the document but the sum of these values can be articulated in this section

## Introduction

**40** This section explains the background to the appraisal, ie why it was produced, the scope and nature of the appraisal and the dates of survey, adoption and publication. Any significant sources of further information might also be mentioned where they provide more detail (such as a conservation management plan or detailed study) or are relevant to decision-making. This is also an appropriate place to provide a brief description of any community involvement in the appraisal's preparation or consultation that was undertaken. The report of public consultation could form an appendix to the document. The history of the area's designation, including any previous changes to the boundary may also helpfully be included.

## Planning policy context

**41** To provide a context for the appraisal, the national and local policy framework is useful as well as a brief explanation of what a conservation area is, how and why it is designated, and a summary of the implications of designation for members of the community looking at the appraisal for the first time. More detail on individual policies that are relevant to decision-making could be included in an appendix.

## General character, location and uses

**42** Before starting more detailed analysis, it is helpful to set the scene by describing the general identity and character of the conservation area (whether it is a village, town or city centre, for example), its townscape and its place within the wider settlement or surrounding landscape. Where the conservation area only covers part of a village, town or city, it is helpful to include the geographical and historical context in relation to the character and appearance of the whole settlement as well as a factual description of the location of the conservation area and its wider setting and brief references to economic profile, general condition and existing or potential forces for change.

## Historic interest

**43** Although the understanding of an area's special historic interest is an important component of an appraisal, this should not require a detailed account of the area's history. Rather the appraisal should focus on setting out what makes the area special and the impact of its history on its current character and appearance. This might be presented as a timeline with details of the character features that represent key phases of development or notable historic events that contribute to the area's special interest.

**44** Once this analysis has been completed the results can be shown on a map which illustrates key periods in the area's history and highlights the survival of those historic elements which have determined the form of the conservation area today (for instance, a medieval road pattern, former defensive lines, watercourses, canals, railways, burgage plots or other significant boundaries, estate walls, formal layouts, and the relationship of buildings to open spaces). Supporting text can summarise how the settlement has developed and a list of publications and other sources describing local history may be helpful.

**45** Heritage assets with archaeological interest, whether above ground structures, earthworks, or buried deposits, often contribute directly to sense of place, thus enhancing the character of an area, provide a source of further understanding of the special historic or archaeological interest, and a resource for research, interpretation and education of the area. Mention in the appraisal and management plan will inform developers and decision-makers of the need for their conservation and protection. Historic characterisation approaches such as intensive or extensive urban surveys (see [Understanding Place: Historic Area Assessments](#)) provide useful further information, usually held in the local HER. It may be helpful to include a map or deposit model showing archaeologically sensitive areas (see [paragraph 18](#) above), or to include these on a more general townscape appraisal map in less complex areas.

## **Architectural interest and built form**

**46** Here set out the features of the area that contribute to its special architectural interest. This might start with a general statement regarding the nature of this interest, whether as a collection of buildings representing a range of uses that document the area's history, that represent the impact of a particular architectural vision for the area, as townscape or with materials and features that are special because of their contribution to local distinctiveness and identity. Surviving or former uses within the area might also have influenced plan form, urban grain and building types, for example grand terraces with mews, villas set in generous gardens, workers' back-to-back housing or industrial buildings connected with particular activities, local trades or specialised markets. The influence of historic patronage can be described here (eg estate workers' housing or a philanthropic model settlement).

**47** To guide decisions on new development it will be helpful to provide more detailed examination of buildings and other structures identifying the characteristics (including scale, form, materials, and the characteristic architectural detailing or styles found in the area, as well as the position of buildings in relation to highways and plot boundaries) that are desirable to preserve or enhance. The range of traditional roofing, walling and surface materials in the area may be characteristic of the local vernacular and it will

be important to note the textures and colours and the ways in which they have been used. Surviving historic surfaces and historic or unusual street furniture are likely to contribute to character and special interest.

**48** Most areas will have at least some variation in architectural character. As such, it may help to define several building types (possibly based on past status or use) that are considered to contribute to the architectural interest. In a village area, for example this is likely to include farmhouses, cottages and agricultural buildings, each of which are likely to have different characteristics as a group. Buildings representing different periods of development are also likely to exhibit variation. It will help to consider whether there are sub-areas within the conservation area that have a distinct architectural character (see Character zones or areas below – [paragraphs 61-3](#)).

**49** Individual buildings or groups that contribute positively to the special architectural interest or character or appearance of the area and those that are distinctive, rare or unique, can be identified on a map. Colour-coding buildings on the map to indicate the characteristic building type, style or use they represent will also help decision-makers rapidly identify their contribution to the area’s architectural interest.

### **Positive contributors**

Most of the buildings in a conservation area will help to shape its character. The extent to which their contribution is considered as positive depends not just on their street elevations but also on their integrity as historic structures and the impact they have in three dimensions, perhaps in an interesting roofscape or skyline. Back elevations can be important, as can side views from alleys and yards. Whilst designated status (ie nationally listed) or previous identification as non-designated heritage assets (such as through local listing) will provide an indication of buildings that are recognised as contributing to the area’s architectural and possibly historic interest, it will be important also to identify those unlisted buildings that make an important contribution to the character of the conservation area. A checklist of questions to help with this process can be found in Table 1. A positive response to one or more of the following may indicate that a particular element within a conservation area makes a positive contribution, provided that its historic form and value have not been eroded.



**Table 1. Criteria to identify buildings that contribute positively to the conservation area**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Is it the work of a particular architect or designer of regional or local note?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Does it have landmark quality?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Does it reflect a substantial number of other elements in the conservation area in age, style, materials, form or other characteristics?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Does it relate to adjacent designated heritage assets in age, materials or in any other historically significant way?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Does it contribute positively to the setting of adjacent designated heritage assets?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Does it contribute to the quality of recognisable spaces including exteriors or open spaces within a complex of public buildings?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is it associated with a designed landscape, eg a significant wall, terracing or a garden building?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Does it individually, or as part of a group, illustrate the development of the settlement in which it stands?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Does it have significant historic associations with features such as the historic road layout, burgage plots, a town park or a landscape feature?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Does it have historic associations with local people or past events?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Does it reflect the traditional functional character or former uses in the area?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Does its use contribute to the character or appearance of the area?

## Locally important buildings

**50** In some cases, it may be appropriate to map and photograph surviving original architectural features and fenestration – distinctive local detailing, doors, windows, roof coverings, trees - to aid future monitoring and enforcement (paragraph 2.4.2 of [Understanding Place: Historic Area Assessments](#) sets out some useful questions to help with this part of the appraisal ).

**51** Recommendations for new local listings could form part of the appraisal or, if there is no ‘local list’, the appraisal might recommend the introduction of local criteria for identifying important unlisted buildings (see [Local Heritage Listing, Historic England Advice Note 7](#)). Local constructional or joinery details, including characteristic historic shop-fronts and unusual local features, often contribute to local distinctiveness. But be aware that conservation area designation is likely to carry more weight in decision-making than local listing in the case of unlisted buildings in conservation areas. On the other hand, local listing might be appropriate for a building or buildings outside a conservation area which have some relationship with it.

## Spatial analysis

**52** Spatial character and plan form need to be described, eg whether the area follows a linear, compact, dense or dispersed pattern of settlement.

## Streets and open space, parks and gardens, and trees

**53** This part of the appraisal describes open spaces within or immediately outside the conservation area, their enclosure, and their visual, and/or other sensory contribution to the character of the place. The relationship between public spaces (such as a market place, street, square, public garden or car park) and private space (gardens, courtyards or playing fields), the qualities they offer, such as their long and winding or wide and open character and the ways in which the spaces were and are used, and the identification of key settlement edges, are all part of this analysis.

**54** Many areas have a hierarchy of street spaces ranging from the busiest, primary streets, in which the largest buildings and more active commercial uses are found to quieter side streets and lanes with more residential use, reflecting different historic processes of development, use and interest. Similarly, the amount of green space and types of planting found between areas is likely to vary based on historic use and design. Highlighting these variations between areas and their contribution to both character and appearance and historic or architectural interest is an important element of character analysis that will help to inform future decisions and help developers generate sensitive proposals.

**55** Some open spaces, parks and gardens may be included on the Historic England Register of Parks and Gardens of special historic interest. Domestic gardens, especially planted front gardens, can make a significant contribution to the character of many conservation areas.

**56** Trees, hedges, boundaries and street greenery are important elements of many conservation areas, not only in public places, but on private land as well. Identification of important single trees and groups and a description of their location and species, age and assessment of condition and potential lifespan can recognise their importance to the conservation area. Developing a strategy for protection, maintenance and replanting may also be beneficial.

**57** Illustrating these important character features on a map will help decision-makers to identify them when making decisions and direct them to the analysis within the appraisal.

## Setting and views

**58** Heritage assets can gain significance from their relationship with their setting whilst views from within or outside an area form an important way in which its significance is experienced and appreciated. This part of the appraisal should identify how the landscape or townscape that the area is located within contributes to its special interest, perhaps by providing approaches along historic routes or visual connections between different areas that illustrate an important historic relationship, such as between a village and its surrounding agricultural landscape, or from an area of

workers' housing and the factory or extractive landscape that was a source of employment. In other cases a relationship may be part of a formal design, such as a designed view from a park or garden to a feature in the landscape beyond. Rather than seeking to identify each and every view that contributes to the area's significance, it may be helpful to explain the types of views (such as views out to the setting, views of street frontages and groups of buildings or views of key landmarks) that are distinctive of the area's character and contribute to its historic or architectural interest. General advice on understanding setting, and how it may contribute to the significance of heritage assets and allow that significance to be appreciated, as well as advice on how views contribute to setting, can be found in [The Setting of Heritage Assets, Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 \(2nd Edition\)](#).

**59** The following may be significant contributors to character:

- views of rivers, the sea and surrounding hills and glimpses of landscape from urban streets
- open spaces, church towers and prominent public buildings that provide landmarks in views or views that illustrate a particular element of the area's historic development
- groups of buildings, both those with a degree of conscious design or with recognised fortuitous beauty and the consequent visual harmony or congruity of development
- townscape attributes such as enclosure, definition of streets and spaces and spatial qualities as well as lighting, trees, and verges, or the treatments of boundaries or street surfaces
- a uniform building height resulting either from past influences or planning restrictions that contribute to the character of views
- distant views of the settlement and those in the approach to it
- adjacent or nearby heritage assets that gain or contribute significance through views to or from the area
- nearby areas of recognised landscape character value such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) or Areas of High Landscape Value, where penetrating or abutting the built-up area, should also be noted and explained

**60** Consider using mapping to illustrate the conservation area's relationship with its wider setting, whether within a larger settlement, or in the context of a rural landscape hinterland, and show any key relationships with other features including views to or from other heritage assets or the wider landscape that contribute to the area's significance. Mapping may also helpfully illustrate the line, corridor or 'cone' of key views within the area. Annotated views are very helpful in identifying the key features within views that contribute to their importance as a means of experiencing the significance of a conservation area.

## Character areas and zones

**61** Discernible character areas or zones within townscape are often evident in larger conservation areas and may already have been defined using Historic Landscape Characterisation. They may reflect the predominant historic character that survives from earlier periods or the original function, class distinctions, design or current uses (eg residential, industrial, commercial, civic or transport-related). The sub-areas may overlap or have 'blurred edges', for example where a 19th century development is partly on historic urban plots and partly in former fields, creating 'zones of transition' between areas of consistent character.

**62** Character areas identified and illustrated on a plan will provide not only a detailed description of the physical constituents but also an evaluation of the significance of the sub-area concerned and a summary of its special interest, in the context of the area as a whole, or of the wider settlement, if the conservation area covers only a part of it.

**63** If there are no recognisable zones the appraisal might highlight the influence that change over time has had in the development of the area, as a whole, particularly if there is diversity and contrast in architectural styles (note might also be made, if relevant, of the impact of different national and international planning and architectural movements on the area).

## An audit of heritage assets

**64** An audit of heritage assets will be helpful in larger, more complex areas, where there is a wide range of historic structures, and/or in areas with an industrial heritage, importantly including a description of condition. Tabulate the results and include them as an appendix to the appraisal, and/or on a map. Where significant change to public space is proposed, an audit of the public realm may be appropriate, noting in the appraisal if such an audit needs to be undertaken.

## Assessment of condition

**65** The appraisal also offers the opportunity to record the general condition of the area, both its economic vitality and the physical condition of the historic buildings, other heritage assets and the public realm, identifying:

- buildings at risk or in a serious state of disrepair
- buildings where in rare cases matters of deliberate neglect may arise
- front gardens lost to hard-standing for cars
- lost architectural features and fenestration
- gap sites eroding special character
- areas of degraded public realm or poorly maintained green space
- areas where traffic, noise or odour impacts affect the ability to use or appreciate the historic or architectural interest of the area

**66** Generic issues that underlie obvious problems will provide evidence and identify the need for additional controls, particularly Article 4 directions, to prevent further erosion of the area's special interest and support its potential capacity for beneficial change. Such problems include:

- the effects of heavy traffic
- a low economic base resulting in vacancy and disrepair of buildings
- pressure for a particular type of change or development
- as well as specific examples (such as buildings at risk, uncontrolled, inappropriate advertising or areas subject to vandalism or antisocial behaviour due to lack of more positive activity)

**67** The annual conservation areas at risk surveys co-ordinated by Historic England are useful both to identify those conservation areas within a local planning authority area which should be prioritised for management plans and the problems within conservation areas that require management proposals. Conservation areas at risk should not be regarded as a measure of council performance, as many issues will be influenced by factors outside the LPA's direct responsibility, but they can provide a focus for Council departments and others' resources to secure regeneration in our most valued historic areas. It is notable that areas seeing challenging economic change and with complex management needs are those most likely to be identified as at risk, often requiring a suite of management measures drawing together various stakeholders.

## Identifying the boundary

**68** An important aspect of the appraisal (and review) process will be considering where the boundaries should be drawn (and whether the boundaries of an existing conservation area should be re-drawn). An explanation of why the boundary is drawn where it is (or extensions are suggested, in the case of existing conservation areas), and what is included and what is excluded, is helpful. The position of the conservation area boundary will, to a large degree, be informed by the considerations identified in [paragraphs 75-76](#) (Finalising, reviewing and publicising the boundary). As spaces contribute to enclosure, as well as framing views of assets and defining settings, a unified approach is desirable to their management as well as suggesting that in almost all situations the conservation area boundary runs around rather than through a space or plot. It will generally be defined by physical features and avoid for example running along the middle of a street, though including the boundary wall of a property which is otherwise not included can in itself cause problems when applying conservation area policies in development management decisions.

## A plan for further action and generic guidance

**69** This section of the appraisal presents an overview and summarises the main problems and pressures identified in the appraisal that will be addressed through a management plan.

## References, appendices and contact details

**70** This section lists references to the principal sources of historic and local information, a short glossary of relevant architectural and vernacular terms, the criteria used for assessing the contribution made by unlisted buildings in the conservation area, useful names and addresses (of both national and local organisations) and the local authority's contact details for enquiries and comments.

# 5

## Designation

**71** It is important to bear in mind that designation in itself will not protect an area from incremental change, which can erode its character as townscape. Where appraisals have not been reviewed for some time, the special interest of the area may have changed or been diluted.

### Suitability for designation

**72** The different types of special architectural and historic interest which have led to designation include;

- areas with a high number of nationally or locally designated heritage assets and a variety of architectural styles and historic associations
- those linked to a particular individual, industry, custom or pastime with a particular local interest
- where an earlier, historically significant, layout is visible in the modern street pattern
- where a particular style of architecture or traditional building materials predominate
- areas designated because of the quality of the public realm or a spatial element, such as a design form or settlement pattern, green spaces which are an essential component of a wider historic area, and historic parks and gardens and other designed landscapes, including those included on the Historic England Register of Parks and Gardens of special historic interest

**73** Conservation area designation is not generally an appropriate means of protecting the wider landscape (agricultural use of land falls outside the planning framework and is not affected by designation as a conservation area) but it can protect open areas particularly where the character and appearance concerns historic fabric, to which the principal protection offered by conservation area designation relates.

**74** A designation made solely to protect veteran trees is unlikely to meet the criteria of special architectural or historic interest as set out in the NPPF, and Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) would be a more appropriate route for protection. Veteran trees may be a more problematic aim because the criteria for TPOs generally exclude trees which are ‘dead, dying or dangerous’.

### **Finalising, reviewing and publicising the conservation area boundary**

**75** Before finalising the boundary it is worth considering whether the immediate setting also requires the additional controls that result from designation, or whether the setting is itself sufficiently protected by national policy or the policies in the Local Plan.

**76** Under section 70(8) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, in addition to notifying both the Secretary of State and Historic England, a local planning authority is required to publicise designation of a conservation area by a notice placed in the London Gazette and a local newspaper. The local authority must follow the same publicity procedures to vary or cancel a designation as required to designate. Involving the community at an early stage is advisable. Local planning authorities may wish to consider how best to inform owners and other local people about the designation as a conservation area and may wish to work with others to ensure that everybody is aware of the designation, its benefits and implications.



# 6

## Managing proposals in conservation areas

### Managing change through a management plan

**77** Under section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 local planning authorities have a statutory duty to draw up and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas in their districts from time to time. Regularly reviewed appraisals, or shorter condition surveys, identifying threats and opportunities can be developed into a management plan that is specific to the area's needs. In turn, this can channel development to conserve the conservation area's special qualities. Both areas in relative economic decline and those under pressure for development can benefit from management proposals that promote positive change.

**78** In determining the appropriate frequency of appraisal and management plan production to satisfy the duty to review conservation areas, LPAs may wish to consider the degree of change experienced by different conservation areas: those with more change would benefit from re-appraisal on a more frequent basis than those which undergo little change from year to year. As pointed out in Historic England's *Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment, Historic Environment Good Practice in Planning 2*, paragraph 12.3: 'It is good practice to use professionally accredited experts and to comply with relevant standards and Guidance'. Paragraph 19 of GPA 2 gives a list of expert groups.

### Involving others

**79** Proposals for conservation and enhancement will be most effective when all the departments at all local authority levels understand the significance of designation and work corporately to ensure that development decisions respect the historic context. Appraisals should therefore be disseminated widely within an authority and in related bodies (Highway Departments, for instance – see below [paragraph 101](#)) as an agreed public resource for all, as a starting point for consideration of the character of an area and to ensure that works in conservation areas do not cut across the duty to conserve and enhance.

**80** It is also important that utility companies, statutory undertakers and the highway authority are engaged from designation through to drawing up and implementing management proposals, as the character and appearance of

conservation areas is often related to the treatment and condition of roads, pavements, street furniture and public spaces and traffic management generally. See Historic England's publication [Streets for All](#) for details of ways in which public realm works can be designed to conserve the character of historic areas.

**81** As pointed out above, Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local authority to submit the proposals for the preservation and enhancement of a conservation area – ie the management plan - for consideration to a public meeting in the area to which they relate. There are major advantages, particularly in public support, in encouraging owners, residents' groups, amenity groups, businesses and community organisations, to discuss the issues facing the area and how these might be addressed. Management plans, like appraisals, which are drawn up without effective consultation are likely to be misunderstood and ineffective, whilst those developed as a process of consensus building are more likely to gain support and momentum.

## Generic management plans

**82** Within a local authority area there may be a number of similar conservation areas or several areas experiencing similar issues or pressures. Development of a generic plan, in the same way as generic appraisals, which can be adapted for individual conservation areas by inserting specific actions, can maximise the use of resources in a proportionate way. The following sections relate to suggested components of a generic management plan.

## Local planning policies

**83** Plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. For conservation areas this is likely to include overarching, strategic policies in Local Plans to ensure special attention is paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing their character or appearance when making decisions affecting these areas. However, the NPPF's approach suggests more is expected as part of a 'positive strategy', likely to include specific, more detailed, policies for individual conservation areas, possibly alongside site allocation and/or design policies. These non-strategic policies can also be included in neighbourhood plans. They are likely to include a mixture of both control measures and encouragement to deliver sustainable development. When considering what a 'positive strategy' will include for conservation areas it is recommended that the following points are considered:

- Which conservation areas are most at risk of decay, neglect or other threats and how should these be addressed by specific policies to encourage positive reuse of buildings and spaces, improve the vitality of areas and support necessary controls such as Article 4 directions where required?

- What design guidance or master-planning may be required to achieve the objective of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness, given the existing contribution of the conservation area in areas of expected high development pressure, and to deliver important allocations?
- Whether opportunities for greater public benefits, such as improvement of public open space or community facilities should be delivered through the conservation of the area as part of development proposals or associated use of Community Infrastructure Levy contributions?

**84** It is very helpful if the proposals map shows boundaries of existing conservation areas and changes/new designations when updated.

- The Local Plan would indicate where conservation objectives are key priorities and why (such as conserving designated heritage assets, including conservation areas, for their special interest) and how those conservation objectives are to be integrated with social, economic and other environmental objectives
- Development management policies might include policies on:
  - identification and protection of important views and vistas
  - criteria for determining applications involving demolition and replacement of buildings
  - support for applications retaining key features and bringing them into their optimum viable use
  - criteria for determining applications involving alterations and extensions to historic buildings
  - requirements to evaluate archaeological interest within conservation areas
  - an urban design strategy for securing good design quality in new development
  - retail and other use class policies to protect uses that contribute to the character or historic or architectural interest of a conservation area
  - site allocations within conservation areas to bring forward and guide beneficial development of gap sites or sites currently detracting from the area's character or appearance

**85** The Local Plan annual monitoring report may assess progress on the implementation of the management proposals and the extent to which planning policies in the local development documents, including policies for the historic environment, are being complied with or are effective in delivering community aspirations. The assessment can then be used to modify and update policies and programmes. Monitoring could also include following up and publishing information from time to time on the local authority's progress with implementing the proposals included in the management strategy for the area.

## Design guidance

**86** The NPPF encourages local planning authorities to develop policies that will guide the design of new development. These should be based on an understanding and evaluation of the area's defining characteristics (such as that developed through a conservation area appraisal) and should aim to ensure, among other objectives, that developments 'are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting' (NPPF). Guidance (both printed and available online) which explains why the area has been designated, what constraints and opportunities result from designation and what policies the local authority has adopted will help home owners, businesses and developers understand how the community wants the area to develop. Councils may find it helpful to keep this type of information available to the public on their websites.

**87** General guidance can be developed quite easily from the appraisal to be specific to the area. It might cover:

- controls, limitations and opportunities for enhancement including local plan policies (see [paragraphs 83-5](#))
- specific issues such as the design of replacement boundary features, windows and doors, or advice on repairing and overhauling existing joinery
- parameters for extensions
- design of shop fronts including the use of security shutters
- outdoor advertisements
- new technology, including satellite dishes, solar panels, small wind turbines and other energy efficient installations
- storage of bins and bicycles
- choice of tree species for replacement planting

**88** An Article 4 direction is a direction under Article 4 of the General Permitted Development Order which enables the Secretary of State or the

local planning authority to withdraw specified permitted development rights across a defined area (see [Appendix](#)). Where an Article 4 direction is in place, or is introduced as a result of the assessment process, the appraisal might also be a source of guidance for applicants seeking to make changes that require planning permission, helping to make successful applications. Such guidance may be generic to several conservation areas.

## Site specific design guidance

**89** Site-specific design guidance and development briefs will encourage new development that complements the established grain, density, settlement pattern and character, while making a positive contribution to the significance of the conservation area. Such guidance is particularly useful where:

- the character of the area derives from its diversity,
- imitative or ‘in keeping with existing’ styles would run counter to the way in which the area has traditionally evolved,
- originality of design, dignity or restraint might be encouraged or
- changes to density and/or urban grain are proposed.

**90** In places where it is not appropriate to identify a local style there may still be characteristics that can helpfully be identified through the appraisal to inform design of proposals to respond sensitively to their context, such as:

- a regular width of frontage,
- of solid to void,
- relationship of buildings to the street (including changes of level within and around the site) or
- mix of scales, as well as
- an overall palette of distinctive materials,
- access arrangements including existing routes, and
- relationship to the wider setting and views in both scale and rhythm,

Other conservation area-specific proposals might include

- development/design briefs for key sites
- development opportunities for sensitive developments within the conservation area

**91** Where there are gap sites or negative contributors within a particular conservation area, a Local Plan/area action plan may include specific proposals for new development while Article 4 directions may prevent further incremental loss, including:

- Measures to tackle locations subject to crime or anti-social behaviour that is affecting the area
- Public realm or highway enhancement schemes to improve access and/or enhance the character or appearance
- Schemes to support reintroduction of lost architectural features either through provision of guidance, planning permission or grant aid support

## Archaeology and conservation areas

**92** Heritage assets with archaeological interest can contribute, directly and indirectly, to the character of conservation areas. These areas will often have further archaeological interest and it may even be possible to define areas with potential for remains of high importance. This archaeological evidence may relate to specific activity that is locally distinct, rare or of particular archaeological interest. There is likely to be a relationship between subsurface remains, monuments and upstanding remains (including buildings and property boundaries) and spaces which contribute to the significance of each by providing evidence of their historic development and use. Whilst the appraisal should summarise understanding of the area's archaeological interest and potential and its contribution to the area's significance, proposals for managing them could include the following:

- Local plan policy identifying particular areas of archaeological interest for protection (for example, where they are of demonstrable equivalent value to scheduled remains, make an important contribution to the conservation area's significance, or represent a particularly important resource for future research into our shared past when evaluated against the Regional Research Framework – see Historic England advice on [Research Frameworks](#))
- Preparation of a research design statement (a form of technical advice note) to inform applications in the area that will identify where investigation and evaluation of heritage assets with archaeological interest will be required to inform planning proposals and what questions these should be guided to answer with reference to Regional Research Frameworks
- Work to conserve monuments through scrub clearance or management of burrowing pests, possibly with support from community volunteers

- Community archaeological research projects, awareness raising to increase enjoyment or improved physical access to monuments, possibly with external funding

**93** The LPA's archaeological advisor will be able to provide further advice on suitable measures to support management of heritage assets with archaeological interest.

## Reducing planning burdens

**94** Councils may wish to use planning measures that actively encourage development and investment that will contribute to an area's conservation and harness the contribution its character and distinctiveness can make. Local Development Orders (LDOs), for example, can be used to provide blanket permission for change of use that will revitalise an area and bring vacant buildings and land back into use. Bradford Metropolitan Borough Council, for example, introduced a Local Development Order for their Little Germany Conservation Area in 2015, permitting buildings for residential, hotel, office, restaurant and café use in order to support the important contribution the area makes to the city centre's economy and its importance as a priority area for regeneration. The Development Order excludes external works to buildings (which will require consideration to conserve the area's distinctive architectural character) and has a limited term of five years, allowing review of its success and any appropriate alterations (see also [Interventions and Investment](#) below). In a similar way a Local Listed Building Consent Order (LLBCO) is in place in Little Germany which works in tandem with the LDO and permits listed building consent for certain works to the high number of relatively homogeneous listed buildings within the conservation area, thus again assisting the regeneration of the area. It is worth noting that neither LDOs nor LLBCOs can cover planning permission for development affecting listed buildings.

## Applying Building Regulations

**95** The Building Regulations allow a flexible approach to be taken to historic buildings. Raising awareness of where this may be necessary to sustain the significance of conservation areas, such as through the retro-fit of buildings to increase energy efficiency, will be important to secure their appropriate implementation (Historic England advice on energy efficiency and historic buildings, for instance, can be found in [Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings - Application of Part L of the Building Regulations to historic and traditionally constructed buildings](#)). In many cases this requires a more carefully considered design process to achieve benefits. Similar flexibility is needed in compliance with the Equalities Act 2010 and the Fire Precautions Act 1971, and highway policies where they would be in conflict with the preservation or enhancement of the area's character or appearance. However, through adaptation to provide inclusive access, for instance, may come long term beneficial use.

## Interventions and investment

**96** Having identified in the appraisal the scale of the problem and priorities for action, a regeneration strategy to focus economic activity and development in the areas where it can be of most benefit would:

- be based on thorough analysis of prevailing problems in the designated area; and
- include the causes of under-use and fabric decay and realistic economic and valuation advice.

**97** Actions resulting from a strategy may include planning policy as well as more direct action or investment by the local planning authority. In both cases a detailed assessment of the major structural and external elements of some or all of the buildings in the area may be needed to estimate the cost of bringing the physical fabric back into good repair. The availability of grant-aid will clearly be important. Further advice is available from Historic England at [Our Grant Schemes](#), from the Heritage Lottery Fund at [Townscape Heritage](#) and in the [Heritage Alliance Heritage Funding Directory \(HFD\)](#).

**98** Consideration might be given to initiatives which bring empty upper floors or buildings back into use within town centres, to help sustain activity within the area, as well as a strategy for the repair and restoration of architectural features to buildings. The local planning authority's role as both a housing provider and their discretionary right to provide business rate relief may be helpful in bringing upper floors into use.

**99** In areas subject to significant economic change, such as the loss of a key industry, or effects of climate change, a more comprehensive approach may be required to regenerate an area. This is likely to involve numerous factors outside the remit of conservation area management. However, a masterplan approach, drawing on the findings of an appraisal, can still be important to ensure that the special interest of the area and its character or appearance provide a golden thread that continues to deliver a unique sense of place drawing on the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring. Historic commercial and industrial areas can be very useful in supporting enterprise and micro/small businesses.

## Enhancement schemes

**100** Environmental improvements can be achieved through the following:

- the removal of negative factors such as obtrusive hoardings and unsightly or obsolete poles and overhead wires and other matters noted in the conservation area appraisal



- sympathetic landscaping and planting, including improvements to street and pavement surfaces
- Introduction of an enhanced maintenance or policing regime in areas subject to littering, vandalism or neglect
- the use of a Section 215 notice on the owner or occupier of any land or building which is adversely affecting the amenity of the conservation area as a result of its derelict condition
- the retention or reinstatement of features of local interest to maintain local character. The [North Oxford railings project](#) illustrates such a reinstatement scheme.
- the encouragement of activities which underline the character of the conservation area (specialist market days to sustain a historic market, for instance)

## Coordinating proposals

**101** There are various lines of action which can assist the management of conservation areas by ensuring that change enhances character and appearance rather than harms them. Such coordination includes:

- **Highway signage and street furniture**

A detailed audit of the public realm to identify the best way to minimise physical obstruction and visual clutter and integrate new signs or street furniture in the design of the street as a whole (the Streets for All regional manuals show how streets can be managed to retain and enhance local character. Associated case studies give practical advice on solving common highway problems such as fixing signs and lights to buildings, and removing or reducing the visual prominence of yellow lines). Communities may also wish to ‘adopt’ landmark items of street furniture, such as historic telephone kiosks that may otherwise be removed due to obsolescence.

- **Traffic management**

Early engagement with highway departments can help to identify sympathetic traffic management designs and street lighting, thereby ensuring that any future programme of highway works brings about positive benefits for the conservation area even where there is no immediate budget for highway interventions ([Manual for Streets 2](#) provides guidance on highway safety and street and road design which considers historic context). Statutory undertakers are responsible for carrying out the permanent reinstatement of the highway where they disturb it with the existing materials, or in the closest possible match, if the materials cannot be re-used.

- **Tree strategies**

A good tree strategy will assess the amenity value of trees on private and public land, before there is pressure to remove them through the tree notification process, as well as suggest a proactive replacement programme for trees on public land so that successor trees are planted ready to replace those that are becoming diseased, dying or dangerous. The strategy could also usefully include measures to ensure trees are protected, and their growing environment enhanced, if opportunities arise during street works or other developments.

- **Open space and green infrastructure strategies**

Such strategies help local authorities to plan and manage open space, both public and private, as valuable green infrastructure assisting the adaptation and mitigation of climate change.

- **Conservation management plans**

Conservation plans are recommended for all classes of heritage asset, where appropriate and proportionate, and may also form an element of a wider regeneration strategy. They may be used to identify necessary works of conservation or consolidation as well as on-going management tasks and monitoring of the condition of features identified as vulnerable in the appraisal.

## **Enforcement and remediation strategy**

**102** Regular monitoring of changes in the appearance and condition of a conservation area allows prompt action to be taken to deal with problems as they arise. Similarly, a dated photographic record created during the appraisal process will help with any later enforcement action. An Enforcement and Remediation Strategy, giving priorities for intended action to secure repairs to, and full use of, buildings at risk in the conservation area, will be informed by a detailed survey of building condition and occupancy (collection of local authority information on conservation areas at risk has provided information on over 80% of conservation areas).

**103** It is advisable for local authorities to use their statutory powers if unlisted buildings that contribute positively to the special interest of a conservation area are falling into decay and where use of the powers would be a positive step. Information on serving urgent works and repairs notices is available in Historic England's step-by-step advice, [Stopping the Rot](#); neglect and enforcement are also mentioned in, paragraphs 45-48 of [Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment, Historic Environment Good Practice in Planning 2](#).

# 7

## Review

**104** The PPG stresses that ‘local planning authorities must review their conservation areas from time to time’ ([section 69\(2\) of the Planning \(Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas\) Act 1990](#)). Resources permitting, every five years is ideal, but review frequency will vary according to the development pressures in the local area.

**105** Further to the reasons given in the PPG as to their usefulness, regular reviews may also highlight areas where designation may no longer be justified through degradation of all or part of the conservation area (see [paragraph 68](#) for boundary revision in such cases). With appropriate management procedures in place, the character and appearance of a conservation area should not change rapidly for the worse and a review might typically result in an addendum to an existing appraisal, recording:

- what has changed
- confirming or redefining the special interest that warrants designation, highlighting additional aspects that contribute to the area’s significance or features newly identified as desirable to preserve or enhance
- setting out any new recommendations; and
- revising the management strategy.

The updated appraisal and related management proposals can then be re-adopted by the local authority. Reviews may usefully be carried out on a regular basis by local community groups under the direction of LPA staff.

**106** The special interest of areas designated many years ago may now be so eroded by piecemeal change or by single examples of poorly designed development that parts of the area may no longer have special interest. In such cases, boundary revisions will be needed to exclude them or, in exceptional circumstances, reconsideration of the overall conservation area designation. Conversely, the existing boundary may have been drawn too tightly, omitting areas now considered of special interest such as historic rear plots with archaeological interest, later phases of development (such as twentieth century housing), or parks, cemeteries and historic green spaces. In such cases the existing boundary may need to be extended.

### Article 4 directions

**1** Minor developments such as domestic alterations and extensions can normally be carried out without planning permission under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (GPDO). Article 4 of the GPDO gives local planning authorities the power to limit these ‘permitted development rights’ where they consider it necessary to protect local amenity or the wellbeing of the area. Using the provisions of Article 4 of the GPDO brings certain types of development back under the control of a local planning authority so that potentially harmful proposals can be considered on a case by case basis through planning applications.

### Assessing the need

**2** As part of the requirement to review conservation areas from time to time, it would be best to use the information gathered. The specific requirement on local authorities under section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to review the areas designated as conservation areas ‘from time to time’ and to bring forward proposals for their preservation and enhancement can provide a robust evidence base on which to assess the need for and scope of an Article 4 direction. Ideally a conservation area management plan developed from a conservation area appraisal may identify areas where removal of ‘permitted development rights’ is necessary to prevent the loss of characteristic architectural detailing or gradual erosion of the character and appearance of the conservation area through inappropriate development. Historic characterisation approaches such as Historic Area Assessment will also provide evidence for using Article 4 directions outside conservation areas.

### Scope

**3** It is only appropriate to remove permitted development rights where there is a real and specific threat and exclude properties where there is no need for the direction to apply. Article 4 directions are most commonly used to control changes to elevations or roofs of buildings in conservation areas fronting a highway, waterway or open space but they can also be used to control other forms of development which might harm the significance of heritage assets, such as alterations to boundary features, installation of renewable-energy microgeneration equipment or erection of outbuildings.

## Monitoring and enforcement:

- 4 Article 4 directions are more likely to be effective if:
  - there is a dated photographic record of the properties affected for the purposes of tracking any subsequent changes
  - guidance is provided for homeowners on how the direction affects them with advice on appropriate repair and alteration
  - the local authority undertakes regular monitoring for compliance and appropriate enforcement
  - the need for the Article 4 direction is reviewed if circumstances change

## Impact on resources

5 Increase in planning applications is likely to be minimal as clear, concise controls, backed up by appropriate guidance, tend to encourage like-for-like repair or replacement in matching materials, which do not require planning permission (*RPS Planning Research into the use of Article 4 directions on behalf of the English Historic Towns Forum*, October 2008, paragraphs 3.18-3.19).

6 Compensation claims have been extremely rare. The RPS 2008 study found no evidence for any compensation payments actually being made (op. cit., paragraphs 3.20-3.21).

7 In terms of the cost of preparation, integrating proposals for Article 4 directions with local plan preparation and conservation area appraisals minimises costs. Community engagement can support the LPA in gathering the requisite information and increase 'ownership' of the emerging designation. In some circumstances concerned residents associations and amenity societies have contributed to the cost of surveying areas and preparing reports detailing where and what permitted development rights it is necessary to remove.

8 Government guidance on making Article 4 directions can be found in the Planning Practice Guidance, [paragraphs 036 \(reference ID: 13-036-20140306\) to 053 \(Reference ID: 13-053-20140306\) - When is Permission Required](#).

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# Historic England

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