

**Chapter 09:
Conservation
Areas
Management Plan**

Management Plan

All Conservation Areas throughout the Borough have significant pressure for development, from the lowliest replacement windows to the desire for comprehensive redevelopment of sites. It is essential that the historic and architectural character of the Conservation Area is maintained through positive management, encouraging replacement and repair, and where appropriate, permitting necessary change.

From the appraisals, a number of issues are raised which could benefit from some form of action. Although not exclusively, these will normally be larger, more long-term projects that will require cooperation and investment to secure. The Council will seek to work in partnership with any relevant parties to achieve these actions over the next ten years through an assortment of methods, incentives and controls. However it should be seen that these actions are positive in the public interest, and are intended to improve the appearance and integrity of each Conservation Area rather than punish owners or occupiers.

The sections below set out firstly the generic management plan for the Borough's 11 Conservation Areas. At the end of each individual appraisal some specific actions tailored to each Conservation Area may be found to add greater value to the Management Plan.

Generic issues to address

Minor/short-term chores

There are certain issues faced by all Conservation Areas – and indeed other non-designated historic areas – that are addressed cumulatively here. These are the minor works that can be undertaken relatively easily, quickly and probably cheaply, but will have much wider benefits – especially if everyone pulls together.

These actions should be undertaken by owners/occupiers without intervention from the Council, however if no improvement is seen by the time of the next appraisals in the coming years, there may be a need for the Council to investigate measures to encourage these works, or even initiate enforcement action. Most of these works will require no more than a day's labour and could most likely be undertaken by any handyman or DIY enthusiast.

- A programme of woodwork painting, including windows, porches, doors and their casements. This applies both to those in need of repair, and also to those which would benefit from a more appropriate colour scheme.
- Basic footway/driveway repair and weeding to improve the appearance of the Conservation Area.
- Roof repair such as reinstatement of chimney pots, and retiling if necessary. Where replacement tiles are necessary, recycled ones

may be preferable in order to match any weathering of the building, thus avoiding the new tiles standing out.

- Gutter repair and replacement is important for the health of the building to channel rainwater away from the walls. However, modern plastic pipes are seldom appropriate on older buildings.
- It is frequently the case that buildings are well maintained, but boundary treatment can be neglected. A programme of hedge replanting/laying/trimming, fence repair and painting/varnishing, wall repair, topping and straightening will greatly enhance each Conservation Area.
- Pointing brickwork and repairing render is important for the health of the building to ensure water penetration is kept to a minimum.
- Gardening and works to trees (subject to TPO regulations) will improve the visual quality of the street

It is also proposed to publicise the Conservation Areas and Historic Environment Folder more widely than perhaps some other planning documents, in order to proactively promote Conservation Area issues. This will include

- displaying posters and making leaflets available in libraries, Council buildings, and other relevant locations
- regular contact with community groups such as the Area Partnership Boards and Parish/Town Councils
- writing an open letter to architects, planning consultants and builders (particularly replacement window companies) who work in the Borough outlining their obligations as well as their opportunities when working within the historic environment
- work with English Heritage to develop more indicators on the health of the historic environment for use in the Annual Monitoring Report

Longer term aspirations

These works will require a greater level of investment over and above basic maintenance, however they will add significant value to properties and to the wider Conservation Area. It is possible that some of these works will have wider economic benefits through the necessary involvement of specialists, which could help to keep traditional building techniques alive, and support local businesses. It does not necessarily follow that these works will be more expensive than more modern methods, as although in some case the initial outlay may be higher, the work will almost inevitably be longer-lasting.

- The reinstatement of lost ironwork such as foot scrapers, door furniture and railings adds the finishing touches to a well-maintained Conservation Area, adding value to properties and to the street scene.
- Repair of sash windows and timber frames will keep traditional windows in good health, reducing the likelihood of a replacement being needed. It is possible to repair even quite large sections of timber frames and window sills without necessitating a full replacement.
- Reinstatement of traditional windows, including the removal of modern uPVC and/or aluminium frames. This will be an expensive task, and probably only likely when the uPVC and aluminium frames come to the end of their life. The temptation to use uPVC again should be resisted, as modern timber windows have many of the properties of uPVC, and are reducing in price.
- Retrospective adaptations to inappropriate buildings, structures and extensions (subject to any necessary consents) to make them more respectful of their host building and the wider Conservation Area would bring about a significant improvement. This includes works such as installing pitched roofs over flat-roofed extensions, and removing cladding and render where it does not respect the building or street.
- Develop signage on principal entrances to the Conservation Areas, promoting their status. This may act as both an advertisement for the Conservation Area and its associated status, as well as for a more general interest in our built heritage across the Borough.
- Promote the removal of uncoordinated street furniture and the replacement with more appropriate harmonised pieces.

Article 4 Directions

The level of Article 4 Direction vary across the Conservation Areas, and in some cases is 'patchy' within the Conservation Areas. It is proposed to rationalise the Article 4 Directions by blanket-applying them across all land within each Conservation Area boundary. This will create some additional bureaucracy for some residents/businesses, but enable the Council to achieve greater consistency in decision-making, and allow each Conservation Area to be maintained more efficiently. The additional controls will not be overly arduous however, as owners/businesses will only experience the planning system occasionally, and so will not generally notice any additional controls.

In order to pursue this aim, the Council will organise information events and invite residents and businesses in the Conservation Areas to attend to explain the process and procedures of Article 4 Directions. These meetings will be held with a view to having the Article 4 Directions in place (where they are supported by residents and businesses) by the end of 2007.

Conservation Area-specific issues

Aside from the relatively minor operations listed above which will benefit all of the Conservation Areas (if not all of the Borough's urban areas), there are some site-specific works that should be addressed in order to allow each Conservation Area to realise its full potential. Please see each individual Conservation Area Appraisal for such issues.