A guide for owners and occupiers

www.wychavon.gov.uk
What is a Conservation Area?

Conservation Areas were introduced in 1967 by the Civic Amenities Act as a response to the perception of the increasing erosion of historic areas through inappropriate new development.

This concept was incorporated into subsequent planning legislation and then consolidated in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

The statutory definition of a Conservation Area is ‘an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’ (section 69 of the Act).

Conservation Areas may include historic town or village centres, historic parks and sites of industrial or transport interest, such as canals.

Conservation Areas create a framework within which the local authority safeguards the character of a whole area by recognising the contribution that individual buildings make to the historic townscape, together with spaces between and around buildings, street patterns, trees, views and other elements such as ground surfaces and boundary treatments.

Based on each of their particular special qualities, our management of further development within Conservation Areas aims at proposals being sympathetic to their character.

The designation of a Conservation Area is only a preliminary step to further action. Section 71 of the Act outlines the duty of local authorities to publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas. Enhancement schemes set out guidelines for positive action to safeguard and reinforce the character of the area.

Buildings and areas outside the boundary of a Conservation Area can often contribute to the setting of the area. Development proposals in such areas should be considered in the context of respecting the character and appearance of the adjacent Conservation Area.

Wychavon currently has 62 Conservation Areas. It must, from time to time, review the boundaries of its existing areas and consider the possible designation of other areas.

Conservation Areas are designated to protect the character of an area in all its aspects. These are attractive buildings in their own right, but it is the relationship of these small simple buildings to each other and to the road, and the absence of road markings, which contribute to the special quality of this village.
The variety of different buildings and uses around the square contributes to the special character of this town Conservation Area.

**Definition of special character**

**What features are of interest?**

It is important that Conservation Areas are seen to justify their status and that the concept is not devalued by the inclusion of areas lacking in special interest. That special interest can come from the presence of one or more of the following:

- Architectural and historic qualities - the character of listed and unlisted buildings and their contribution to the character of the area
- Landform characteristics
- Archaeological significance
- Historic patterns of land ownership
- Character and hierarchy of spaces and general townscape quality
- Prevalence and use of particular building materials
- Contribution made by green spaces, trees and hedges to the overall character of the area
- Prevailing or past uses, and their influence on building types and plan forms
- Relationship of the built environment to landscape or open countryside
- Definition of significant landmarks, views and vistas
- Extent of the loss or damage to features of interest
- Identification of negative areas detracting from the area’s special interest
- Identification of any neutral areas (that neither enhance or detract)

It is the quality of these criteria that are assessed in defining the extent of a Conservation Area. When establishing an actual boundary on a plan, the following principles are applied wherever possible:

- The boundary should follow clearly visible features on the ground, e.g. walls, hedges, etc
- Boundaries should enclose the whole curtilage of buildings, and not cut across gardens
- Normally the boundary should include both sides of a road
- The creation of ‘holes’ within an area must be avoided
Pathways provide pedestrian links to, from and within Conservation Areas and can give a different perception of an area.

The setting of a building provided by gardens and open spaces can be as important to the Conservation Area as the building itself.

Character appraisals

How are these features assessed and protected?

The protection of a locality does not end with the designation of a Conservation Area. Designation demonstrates a commitment by the council to positive action for the safeguarding and enhancement of an area’s character and appearance. It is important to highlight at an early stage those elements and features of interest which should be preserved or enhanced.

No two Conservation Areas are alike - each is unique. A Conservation Area Character Statement is written with the intention of defining the special qualities and the architectural and historical interest that warranted the designation of the Conservation Area. The Statement appraises the context in which development proposals can be assessed in terms of their impact on the Conservation Area’s character and appearance.

The Character Statement will be a material consideration in the determination of applications for development within, or affecting the setting of, the Conservation Area. Proposals must demonstrate explicitly, usually via the production of a design statement, how that scheme will actively preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.
Details such as this wrought iron railing, canopy bracket, lead rainwater pipe and stone steps, add to the quality of a Conservation Area. In Conservation Areas there are stricter controls than elsewhere over the removal of features such as these.

The variety of buildings in this street scene is unified by consistent elements such as the same building stone and roofing materials. New buildings and alterations in Conservation Areas need to maintain this kind of consistency.

Extra protections for Conservation Areas

Conservation Areas have extra protections which are in addition to other permissions such as Planning Permission, Listed Building Consent, Scheduled Monument Consent, Article 4(2) Directions.

These extra protections are detailed within the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (as amended), and summarised below:

Planning Permission is specifically required for the following works within a conservation area

- Demolition of a building with a cubic content larger than 115 cubic metres in volume. Demolition of a gate, wall, fence or means of enclosure that is 1m or more high where abutting on a highway, waterway or open space, or 2m or more in any other case. Boundaries can be curtilage listed in which case other consents may be required. (Replaces Conservation Area Consent).

- Additions and alterations to the roof of a dwellinghouse including dormers and Solar PV.

- Solar PV or thermal equipment installed on a wall (including building elevations) that fronts a highway.

- Stand alone solar panels or equipment where it would be nearer to any highway which bounds the curtilage than any part of the property

- Cladding of the outside of a dwelling house with stone, artificial stones, pebble dash, render, timber, plastic or tiles.
Conservation Areas come in all sizes and forms. This canal Conservation Area depends as much on its bridges, locks and associated buildings as it does on the canal itself for its distinctive character.

• Installation or replacement of a chimney, flue or soil and vent pipe on a wall or roof of a dwelling house which fronts highway and forms either the principal or side elevation of the property.

• Installation of a satellite dish on a chimney, wall or roof slope of a dwellinghouse which faces onto, and is visible from a highway or on a building taller than 15 metres.

• Extensions which project beyond a wall forming a side elevation of the original dwelling house or are higher than one storey and extend beyond the rear wall of the original dwelling.

• The provision of a new building, enclosure, pool or container within the curtilage of a dwelling house where any part of the building, enclosure etc would be sited on land between a side wall of the house and the boundary of the curtilage.

• Installation, replacement or alteration of a flue forming part of a combined heat and power system on a dwelling house where the flue would be installed on a roof slope which fronts a highway.

• Shop and business sign regulations are complex particularly in conservation areas. (See separate leaflet Quick Guide to Shop Fronts and Signage for the correct permissions requirements).

• 6 weeks notification of works to trees in conservations areas (see separate leaflet Tree Advice Note – A guide for tree owners)

It is recommended that you seek a professional opinion before commencing development.

For further information on Planning Permission, Listed Building Consent, Scheduled Monument Consent and Article 4(2) Directions access the Planning Portal via www.wychavon.gov.uk/planning/how to make an application
New Development

It must be remembered that the character of a Conservation Area is an amalgam of small details which can be lost through a series of minor alterations that, taken together, can have a major negative impact on that character. Such changes include:

- Unsuitably designed replacement windows, particularly plastic windows or large sheets of glass
- New front doors of pseudo-historic design that are often too grand for modest cottages
- Stained or varnished windows and doors - traditionally within Wychavon district these are painted timber
- Replacing slate or clay tile roofs with concrete tiles

Any alterations or extensions will be expected to respect the special character of the Conservation Area, and be of a high standard of design using traditional high quality materials such as natural slate or clay tiles for roofs, and painted timber for windows and doors.

Conservation Area designation is not intended to prevent new development. Instead, the Council seeks to ensure that proposals either preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area.

New development, including minor additions and alterations, must respect the existing appearance and character in regard of siting, setting, materials, colour, form, scale and detailing. Development proposals should also relate to historic patterns of land use and avoid the unnecessary loss of buildings and features of interest.

Design advice for development proposals in a Conservation Area is available from Planning Services at the District Council, and officers particularly welcome involvement at an early stage in the design process.
Help and Advice
For further information and advice on Conservation Areas, contact:
The Heritage Section, Planning Services, Wychavon District Council, Civic Centre, Queen Elizabeth Drive, Pershore, Worcs. WR10 1PT
T: 01386 565565
E: planning@wychavon.gov.uk
www.wychavon.gov.uk

Further Reading:
Useful general information on Conservation Areas is published by English Heritage at www.english-heritage.org.uk