

Conservation Area Appraisals

A Guide to the Process of Defining the Special Architectural or Historic Interest, Character and Appearance of the Conservation Areas within Vale Royal

Background

Introduced by the Civic Amenities Act of 1967, Conservation Areas are now an accepted part of Town and Country Planning legislation and practice. Local Planning Authorities are required to identify "areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance". Conservation areas are many and varied. There were more than 9,000 in England by mid 1996.

With the experience of time, the need to manage these areas has been recognised, if their special interest, character and appearance are to be retained. The first task in this process is to define and analyse the special characteristics that justified the designation of the conservation area. This is achieved by carrying out Conservation Area Appraisals.

The Conservation Area Appraisal will provide a basis for development plan policies and development control decisions, both within and adjacent to the Conservation Area boundary. Subsequently the appraisal will provide the basis of proposals for the preservation or enhancement of the area, including the identification of development opportunities.

Although most existing conservation areas have detailed descriptions, few have the kind of character definition and analysis that is now recognised as essential. It is proposed to survey, record and analyse all of the existing conservation areas within Vale Royal. Proposals for further conservation area designations will be subject to the same process prior to formal designation.

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

The Conservation Area Appraisal will provide a description of the elements that contribute to and define the character of the conservation area. However it will only be a snapshot in time. There may be important character variations according to the time of day, day of the week or time of the year. It will not always be possible to identify and record these within the constraints of preparing the appraisals. The omission of any particular building, feature or space should not be taken to imply that it is of no interest.

Conservation is not the same as preservation. The designation of a conservation area does not mean that everything will be preserved, or that there will be an end to new development. In many cases, the right sort of development may enhance an area, and will be encouraged.

An important part of the appraisal process, will be to involve the local community. It is recognised that these studies are only valid if their content is understood and accepted by those people who are most closely affected by the designation of the conservation area. As a result, a public consultation exercise will take place, providing the opportunity for contributions to the study and comments on the analysis and proposals.

Following extensive research into the practice of producing Conservation Area Appraisals, Vale Royal Borough Council has developed its own approach to the subject. A list of criteria has been adopted to cover those elements which have been deemed to be most likely to contribute to the special character of the conservation areas within the Borough. This enables the analysis to be undertaken consistently both within and between conservation areas.

The framework for conducting the appraisals programme and the checklist of criteria for the studies is set out in the remainder of this leaflet. A schedule of the designated and potential conservation areas is also attached.

Framework

Appraisal Programme

1. Formulate draft appraisal framework.
2. Consultation with relevant Parish Councils/Civic Bodies on draft criteria.
3. Consideration of comments and re-drafting of criteria.
4. Develop appraisals programme.

The Borough's conservation areas will be divided into a number of types. A representative will be selected from each type as a first example. (See attached schedule). The remaining conservation areas will be prioritised to give precedence to those conservation areas where the potential for alteration or development is perceived to be greatest. If an immediate threat becomes known, the relevant conservation area will receive a priority appraisal.

Larger conservation areas will be sub-divided into smaller parts, especially where areas of significantly different character can be easily defined.

Appraisal Process for Each Conservation Area

1. Survey and desk top research.
2. Compile draft document.
3. Consultation exercise to include contacting the Parish Council, public meeting and exhibition and publicity through the media.
4. Consideration of comments and re-draft.
5. Publish document.

Future Programmes

These will be determined by a review of all the appraisals and could include:

- A review of conservation area boundaries.
- Proposals for preservation or enhancement.
- Potential new designations.

These will be evaluated against the prevailing characteristics of existing conservation areas as revealed in the appraisals. Any proposed designations will be subject to consultation, including publishing proposals in the local paper and holding a public meeting and exhibition.

Appraisal Criteria

The following list outlines some of the criteria to be used in the appraisal of the Borough's conservation areas. The list is not exhaustive and the criteria applicable to any given area will depend entirely upon the nature of the area being studied.

History

1. Historic evolution of the settlement

- i. Origins and development of the settlement.
- ii. Topographic elements that have influenced the settlement form.
- iii. Influence of current or previous land uses on the area.

2. Archaeological significance and potential of the area

Including identification of any schedule ancient monuments and industrial archaeology.

Townscape

3. Form and structure of the settlement

- i. Boundary of the conservation area.
- ii. Views within, into and out of the area.
- iii. The importance of spaces within the conservation area.
- iv. Enclosure within the settlement.
- v. Urban form.
- vi. Road pattern.

4. Buildings

- i. Age profile.
- ii. Dominant architectural styles and types.
- iii. Building materials - texture and colours.
- iv. Key buildings - listed and unlisted.
- v. Interesting and unusual details.

5. Street scene

- i. Street furniture, wirescape, water pumps/troughs.
- ii. Shop fronts, advertisements.
- iii. Landmarks and focal points with historic connection or visual interest.
- iv. Floorscape - materials, colour and texture.

Landscape

6. Landscape setting

7. Green spaces, trees, hedges

8. Water features

Small Rural	Large Rural	Suburban
1 Alvanley	7 Eaton	12 Hartford
2 Bartington	8 Higher Whitley	13 Overton (Frodsham)
3 Cuddington	9 Kingsley	14 Sandiway
4 Lower Whitley	10 Little Budworth*	15 Weaverham*
5 Onston	11 St Chads (Winsford)	16 West Road (Weaverham)
6 Whitegate*		
	Unique	Potential
Large (to be sub-divided into smaller parts)	23 Marston (Lion Salt Works)	A Aston
17 Bostock*		B Darnhall
18 Davenham		C Kingsley Green
19 Frodsham		D Rushton
20 Great Budworth		E Solvay Road (Northwich)
21 Northwich (Town Centre)	Joint Exercise	F Trent and Mersey Canal (shown as -----)
22 Tarporley	24 Lower Peover <i>(To be undertaken with Macclesfield Borough Council and Cheshire County Council)</i>	



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07/97