

# Supplementary Planning Guidance Note

# Conservation Areas



## ***Supplementary Planning Guidance Note: Conservation Areas (March 2015)***

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This note is one of a series of Supplementary Planning Guidance notes (SPGs), amplifying the development plan policies and other issues in a clear and concise format with the aim of improving the design and quality of new development. The notes are intended to offer broad guidance which will assist members of the public and officers in discussions prior to the submission of planning applications and assist officers in handling and members in determining planning applications.

## 2 Status and Stages in preparation

- 2.1 The Council's SPGs are not part of the adopted development plan. The Welsh Government has confirmed that following public consultation and subsequent Local Planning Authority (LPA) approval, SPG can be treated as a material planning consideration when LPAs, Planning Inspectors and the Welsh Government determine planning applications and appeals. This SPG was formally adopted by Denbighshire County Council's Planning Committee on 18th March 2015.

- 2.2 These notes have been prepared in accordance with guidance contained in Welsh Office Circular 61/96 ('Planning and the Historic Environment: Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas') and 1/98 ('Planning and the Historic Environment: Directions by the Secretary of State for Wales'); Planning Policy Wales (July 2014); Local Development Plans Wales (December 2005); Welsh Government Technical Advice Notes (TANs); Cadw's policy document Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment in Wales (2011), and English Heritage guidance on 'The Setting of Heritage Assets' (2011).

## 3 Background

- 3.1 Conservation Areas are *"areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance"* (Article 69 of Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990). They were introduced in 1967 under Civic Amenities Act, repealed by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. It is an area based designation by local planning authorities for preserving and enhancing the special character and appearance of towns, villages and areas.

- 3.2 There are 33 conservation areas in Denbighshire:

Betws Gwerfil Goch	Llandrillo	Prestatyn Castle
		Mount and Nant Hill
Bodelwyddan	Llanelidan	Prestatyn Fforddilas
Bodfari	Llanfair D C	Prestatyn High Street

Corwen	Llanferres	Rhyl Central
Cwm	Llangollen	Rhyl River Street
Cynwyd	Llanrhaeadr	Rhyl Seabank Road
Denbigh	Llantysilio	Ruthin
Dyserth	Meliden Central	Rhuddlan
Efenechtyd	Meliden Ffordd Penwhylfa	St Asaph
Henllan	Nantglyn	Trefnant
Llanarmon-yn-Ial	Plas yn Pentre (nr Llangollen)	Tremeirchion

- 3.3 Plans showing the boundaries of these areas are available for inspection online ([www.denbighshire.gov.uk/ldp](http://www.denbighshire.gov.uk/ldp)) and at the Planning Offices based at Caledfryn, Smithfield Road, Denbigh, LL16 3RJ.
- 3.4 There are many types of conservation areas. These include estate villages, such as Bodelwyddan and Llaneliden, Georgian and Victorian towns with medieval cores, that are part of historically important routes such as Corwen, castle towns such as Denbigh, Ruthin and Rhuddlan, Victorian seaside towns such Rhyl and Prestatyn, and important historic settlements in an exceptional landscape setting such as Llangollen and Llantysilio.
- 3.5 Quality of place is the prime consideration in identifying Conservation Areas. The different characteristics of towns and villages mean that each area will have a unique special architectural or historic interest. This special interest results from the character provided by a variety of features. This can include a combination of street patterns, relationships between buildings and spaces, particular building styles and architectural detailing, open spaces, landscape, trees and views and vistas. Buildings range from the iconic, such as castles and medieval timber framed buildings, to the overall townscape, to building detailing and boundaries. Conservation areas, particularly in historic towns, often have archaeological interest as well, both in buried remains and information embedded in the street pattern, for example.
- 3.6 Conservation area designation is not an end in itself. It is managed through periodic review of the special characteristics of what makes that area special. By definition, conservation areas have statutory protection and are places which should be conserved. They require active management in order to retain their reason for existence. When exercising other functions with respect to buildings or land in conservation area (particularly the granting of planning permission) special attention is paid to preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area.
- 3.7 Planning applications should be assessed on how development proposals impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area. The character and appearance of these areas can be retained and enhanced in a

positive way. Development proposals should be of high quality and designed in context within the building and area to which it relates. Well-designed new buildings will enhance the appearance and character of the Conservation Areas.

- 3.8 The first conservation areas in Denbighshire were designated in 1971. There have been significant changes to a number of conservation areas in Denbighshire subsequently. Significant improvements to buildings have resulted in the restoration of the townscape through the successful lottery funded Townscape Heritage Initiative area in Denbigh. The Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage Site directly impacts on Llangollen and Llantysilio conservation areas. The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) extension includes the urban areas of Llangollen and Corwen. There is a new shopping centre in Prestatyn Conservation Area, and a regeneration strategy in West Rhyl that affects Rhyl Central Conservation Area.

#### **4. Conservation Legislation, Planning Policy and Regulations**

- 4.1 The primary legislation for carrying out building conservation functions is the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. There are various duties that the local authority has to provide under this Act with regard to conservation areas. Under Sections 69, 70 and 71 the Council must determine which parts of its area should be conservation areas, decide whether to extend these or create new ones, and publish proposals for their preservation and enhancement. Section 72 identifies the planning functions in conservation areas, in particular to pay special attention to the desirability of enhancing or preserving the appearance of conservation areas.
- 4.2 National guidance can be found in Welsh Office Circular 61/96 and 1/98; Planning Policy Wales (Edition 7, 2014) Chapter 6 'Conserving the Historic Environment', and Technical Advice Notes (TAN) 12: Design (2014).
- 4.3 National guidance has been updated since the adoption of the last SPG on Conservation Areas in 2003; in particular Cadw's policy document 'Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment in Wales' (2011) and TAN 12. English Heritage has also produced guidance on 'Understanding Place: Conservation Area Management, Appraisal and Management' (2011). It should be noted that the English Heritage document only relates to England and some of the rules and regulations will differ in Wales but it does contain principles to consider which are generic to all listed buildings.
- 4.4 Welsh Office Circular 61/96 and Planning Policy Wales (PPW) identify the

important role that local planning authorities play in conserving the historic environment whilst balancing wider sustainable development responsibilities. The objective is to “preserve or enhance the historic environment, recognising its contribution to economic vitality and culture, civic pride and the quality of life, and its importance as a resource for future generations”.

- 4.5 PPW (Edition 7, 2014) stipulates in Chapter 6 Paragraph 6.3.2 that “*the positive management of conservation areas is necessary if their character or appearance is to be protected and enhanced*”, and in Paragraph 6.4.6 that “*development plan policies should make it clear that development proposals will be judged for their effect on the character and appearance of conservation areas, as identified in (a conservation area) assessment and proposal document, to ensure that any new development is in accord with the area’s special architectural and historic interest.*”
- 4.6 LDP Policy RD1 ‘Sustainable development and good standard design’ outlines general development management considerations relevant to development affecting conservation areas. LDP Policy VOE1 ‘Key Areas of Importance’ is a specific policy for planning applications affecting conservation areas. The physical location of conservation areas in Denbighshire, in the centre of town and villages, is a key consideration for ensuring that conservation areas are adapted or changed in a positive way, retaining their character that makes the towns and rural areas of Denbighshire unique. Providing positive and clear guidance on changes to conservation areas supplement relevant LDP policies on respecting distinctiveness, sustainable development, promoting a sustainable economy and valuing our environment.
- 4.7 The Council is also required to review their areas from time to time and to consider whether further designations of Conservation Areas are required. The Council is continuing this process of review and an appraisal of all Conservation Areas is taking place. Conservation Areas may be extended, reduced, deleted or added to as a result of this process and additional management measures may be considered appropriate for some areas.

## 5. **What does designation mean?**

- 5.1 Controls over demolition: Demolition or substantial demolition of a building within a conservation area will usually require permission from the local authority. Most works involving demolition require Conservation Area Consent. Consent for demolition will not normally be granted until it is known what form redevelopment will take, and how it preserves or enhances the conservation area. There may however be some poor quality buildings which, if removed, would result in visual improvements to Conservation Areas.

- 5.2 Trees: Trees are given automatic protection in conservation areas for the contribution that they make to the amenity of an area. If you are thinking of cutting down a tree or doing any pruning work (with some exceptions) you must formally notify the Council 6 weeks in advance. This is to give the Council time to assess the contribution the tree makes to the character of the conservation area and decide whether to make a Tree Preservation Order. Some trees may be additionally protected by a Tree Preservation Order because of their importance to the locality.
- 5.3 *Positive management of detailing over new development* - Certain property alterations may need planning permission. These would include adding extensions, roof extensions and alterations, cladding, installing satellite dishes and solar panels, and laying paving or building walls.
- 5.4 All proposals for development, including the alteration of shop fronts and the display of advertisements in conservation area, require considered design to preserve and enhance the area's special character. Design, materials, lighting, style and colour are of particular importance.
- 5.5 *Article 4 (2) Directions* - In some Conservation Areas an Article 4 (2) Direction has been introduced. This ensures that alterations to the front of dwellings are carried out in sympathy with the special character of an area. Where such a Direction is in place, planning permission is normally required for the alteration of windows, doors, porches, chimneys, roofs and boundaries.
- 5.6 Payment of a planning application fee is not required for Conservation Area Consent, consent for works to trees or applications under the Article 4 (2) Direction.

## 6. **Enhancement of Conservation Areas**

- 6.1 Denbighshire County Council will, where opportunity arises, enhance the appearance of its Conservation Areas, and is committed to the following actions to improve the appearance and maintain the character of Conservation Areas:
- A proactive Conservation Area Management Strategy;
  - Positive development management, through pre-application discussion and planning consents to ensure protection and enhancement;
  - Environmental improvements through partnership with others;
  - Providing advice and information;
  - Sourcing grant aid.

## 7. Understanding Character

7.1 The design of new developments within Conservation Areas should be in sympathy with the aim of ensuring that the character of the overall area is retained and/or enhanced.

7.2 It is recommended that the services of an architect are employed to produce the high standard of design required for development in Conservation Areas. Planning Officers of Denbighshire County Council are happy to give guidance and advice prior to detailed design work commencing to help arrival at a satisfactory result.

7.3 Design considerations should be based on an assessment of the site context and character of the conservation area. TAN 12 provides clear guidance on assessing context, but these will also help you:

- Historic maps - historic context;
- Building types – describe what is there at the moment: for example timber framed buildings, traditional cottages, estate cottages, Georgian architecture, Victorian architecture, Edwardian architecture;
- Historic photos – for the reinstatement of features such as shop fronts, windows, frontages etc;
- Design cues - look at the existing architectural palette – materials, roofscape, windows, doors, boundaries, landscaping and views.

7.4 Photo 1: A shop on High Street, Denbigh. The frontage was reinstated using historic photograph (before [this page] and after [next page])





7.5 **Castle Street, Ruthin** – key characteristics include medium density (18.4 units per hectare); a strong vertical townscape rhythm created by plot width, narrow frontages, limited blank walls and window and door proportions; two and a half storeys; a building line fronting the pavement creating a sense of enclosure and intimacy; buildings framing the view within a very narrow street; high quality composition of buildings and roofscapes of different periods in a vernacular style; a good colour palette of materials; all within a tightly woven historic consolidated core. (see Photo 2)

7.6 Photo 2: Castle Street, Ruthin



7.8 **The Terrace, London Road, Corwen** – key characteristics includes Victorian architectural uniformity; medium to high density; a vertical emphasis created by plot width, original door and window proportions and detailing; townscape rhythm created by regular canted bay windows and chimneys; welcoming and articulated facades created by strong detailing to frontages and boundaries; small front gardens proportionate to elevation and street, uniformity of materials; overall creating a strong townscape with a sense of formality on the historic A5 route from London to Holyhead. (see Photo 3)

7.9 Photo 3: The Terrace, London Road, Corwen



7.10 New buildings, designed to a high standard should be sited, designed and appear externally in sympathy with their location and the overall appearance of the area.

7.11 **New build in Denbigh Conservation Area** – modern materials and style, but the attention to detail in terms of roof pitch, plot size and overall proportions allows it to sit well within its historic context. (Please see photos on next page for details.)

7.12 Alterations and extensions to buildings should be sympathetic to the character and appearance of existing buildings in terms of scale, size and use of materials.

7.13 Detailing is important to buildings, boundaries and the wider landscape.

7.14 Photo 4: **New build in Denbigh Conservation Area – detailed new built (top) as blended into the townscape (below)**



7.15 Photo 5: **Detailing is important**



## 8. **Contacts**

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