

Queen's Park

Conservation Area Management Plan

Introduction

The local authority is required to formulate and publish proposals for preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas. The first stage is to produce a "Conservation Area Character Appraisal", which aims to give a clear assessment of the special interest, character and appearance that justified the area being designated. It also establishes what is locally distinctive about Queen's Park and what needs to be protected in order to maintain its special character. It is intended that this appraisal will provide a sound basis, defensible on appeal, for development control decisions and for the guidance of residents and developers.

This "Management Plan" is the next stage. It gives design guidance that is applicable to Queen's Park and identifies opportunities for preservation and enhancement, where additional policy guidance or enforcement action maybe required and the need for a review of the conservation area boundary.

Background policy guidance

The following briefly sets out the planning policy background within which this guidance is written.

The Department for Communities & Local Government

PPSI Delivering Sustainable Development

This guidance emphasises that high quality development through good design makes a vital contribution to the creation of safe, sustainable and livable communities. Development proposals should not be conceived as short term and should be judged by their long-term impact.

By Design

Advocates the use of design guides to steer development proposals. The use of guidelines enables the Council to communicate its commitment to all in the development process.

PPG15 Planning and the Historic Environment

Sets out the need for Local Authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas.

Regional guidance

Planning Guidance for the East Midlands advocates the use of 'design led' approaches to development, which take account of historic character. It also stresses the need for architectural design to be functional and to support vitality, yet respect local building character.

Structure Plan

Environment Policy (1) indicates the need to identify measures to enhance areas, sites and settings of architectural and historic interest.

Charnwood Community Strategy

The Community Strategy identifies that the quality of the built environment makes an important contribution to the economy of the Borough.

Charnwood Corporate Plan

This document identifies the aims and objectives of the Council to improve the built environment for everyone. As a priority the Council seeks to protect the look and feel of our towns and villages.

Local Plan

The Local Plan sets out the basis on which the Council will view and determine planning applications. Policy ST/1 ii and iii state the Council's aim to protect and improve the quality of the built environment of Charnwood. In the majority of cases the following policies may need to be considered before any design is undertaken.

- EV/1 Design
- EV/2 and 3 Archaeology
- EV/4 to 7 Listed buildings
- EV/8 Buildings of local architectural and historic interest
- EV/10 Development in conservation areas
- EV/11 to 13 Advertisements
- EV/18 Open spaces of special character
- EV/21 to 26 Ecological, geological and wildlife conservation
- EV/38 Satellite dishes
- CA/11 Use of upper floors
- CA/12 and 13 Shopfront design and security

Appendix I sets out these policies in full.

Leading in Design

This document builds on the design policies set out in the Charnwood Local Plan and will contribute to the development of more effective approaches to securing good design in the emerging Local Development Framework. The guide is also intended to support the implementation of the community strategy, Charnwood Together, by providing a set of principles that will inform the physical development implicit in the initiatives and actions of all partners in the local strategic partnership.

Other SPG/SPD guidance.

- Backland & Tandem Development.
- House Extensions
- Shopfronts & Signs
- Student Housing
- Draft Town Centre Masterplan
- Draft Devonshire Square Development Brief
- Draft Public Realm Strategy

General Principles

Any proposed changes should be carried out in a sensitive manner, taking into account the established character of the conservation area. New development must respond to its immediate environment i.e. its context, in terms of scale, form, materials and detailing. Otherwise, alterations will have a detrimental effect on the historic and locally distinctive form of the area.

Within the conservation area, where the quality of the general environment is already considered to be high, the Council will insist on good quality schemes which respond positively to their historic setting. This extends to small buildings such as garages and even boundary walls and fences. Even minor alterations need to be carefully considered as incremental change can have a significant detrimental affect on the character of an area over a period of time.

Central government guidance contained in PPS1 and PPG15, Borough of Charnwood Local Plan, Leading in Design and other SPD, and Neighbourhood Design Statements will be used to assess the quality of proposal for new development.

The following general principles should be noted when considering any development in all parts of the conservation area:

1. The conservation area has a distinct "grain" or pattern of built form and spaces which are part of its historic development. This gives the conservation area great individuality,

characterised by the pattern of historic buildings, ancient footpaths and highways and clearly defined boundaries. This “grain” is an important part of the character of the conservation area and will be protected.

2. The emphasis for new proposals will be on high quality of design. There may be opportunity for innovative modern design. However a dramatic contemporary statement is unlikely to be appropriate. Good modern design can be used to create positive changes in historic settlements
3. Scale is the combination of a building’s height and bulk when related to its surroundings. Proposed new development must take into account the scale of the existing buildings, and must not dominate or overwhelm them.
4. Alterations and extensions must respect the form of the original building and its locality. The use of high quality materials and detailing, whether modern or traditional is essential. Roof lines, roof shapes, eaves details, verge details and the creation of new chimneys are important considerations.
5. Windows and doors of a traditional design respect the historic nature of the buildings to which they belong and make a very important contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. The use of upvc and standardised high speed joinery techniques nearly always leads to unsuitably detailed windows which will be generally unacceptable in the conservation area. In most cases the building regulation requirements can be met without the need to use clumsy and awkwardly detailed windows.
6. The appraisal has identified the types of materials that characterise the conservation area and where possible these materials should be used so that alterations respect the established character.
7. Applicants for planning permission must provide a “Design Statement”, to explain the design decisions that have been made and to show how proposed alterations relate to their context. A detailed analysis of the locality should demonstrate that there is a full appreciation of the local streetscape and how it has developed, including prevailing building forms, materials and plot ratios.

Procedures to ensure consistent decision-making

As mentioned previously the basis of the character appraisal is to inform and guide development control decisions. A consistent approach to this decision making will be aided by providing:

- Discussions with conservation and design officers to help development control officers to make informed decisions, no matter how minor the proposed changes.
- Opportunities for pre-application discussion regarding significant alterations.
- Opportunities to review decisions and assess the impact of approved alterations through post development site visits.

Enforcement strategy

Effective enforcement is vital to make sure there is public confidence in the planning system to protect the special character of the area. Unauthorised development can often be damaging to that character.

Taking proactive action can improve the appearance and character of the area, making it more attractive and in some instances increasing the potential for investment. Effective monitoring of building work to make sure it is carried out in accordance with the approved details and with planning conditions ensures new development makes the positive contribution envisaged when permission was granted.

In order to protect the character of the conservation area the Borough Council will seek to:

- use enforcement powers in cases where unauthorised development unacceptably affects the character of the conservation area.
- take proactive action to improve or enhance the appearance of the area.
- monitor development under way to make sure it fully complies with the terms of any planning permission or listed building consent.

Carrying out unauthorised work to a listed building or to protected trees and hedgerows and the unauthorised demolition of a building within a conservation area is an offence. In such cases, the Council will consider prosecution of anyone responsible and ensure any necessary remedial action is taken.

Article 4 Direction proposals

The quality of the conservation area is often threatened by the cumulative impact of numerous small changes to many buildings. Terraces that once displayed an integrity of design through the use of matching features such as doors, window, chimneys and porches, have been unbalanced by various alterations and additions. On the whole such changes do not require planning permission.

In order to preserve and enhance the character of conservation areas, many planning authorities use Article 4 Directions to restrict permitted development rights on groups of buildings or areas. Restrictions normally relate to particular elements such as replacement windows and doors, or roofing.

Currently, the loss of front boundary walls and fences as well as the alterations to windows and doors is having a detrimental impact on the character of the Queens Park Conservation Area and the opportunity of using Article 4 (2) Directions powers to address this will be investigated.

Buildings at risk

It is intent of the Borough Council to take necessary action to secure repair & full use of any buildings at risk. At the moment none of the listed buildings in the conservation area are at risk of decay and all appear to be in a good state of repair. The locally listed buildings are generally in good condition.

Review the boundary

A review of the boundary has been considered and the recent designation of this conservation area means that it is unnecessary to undertake a review at this stage.

Identify possible buildings for spot listing

Some of the buildings within the conservation area have been identified for “spot listing”. These include:

- Carnegie Library, Granby Street
- United Reformed Church, Frederick Street

Enhancement

Most issues concerning opportunities for enhancement are related to Queen’s Park itself and the area around Devonshire Square. These issues will be thoroughly addressed by the forthcoming Queen’s Park Management Plan and the Devonshire Square Development Brief.

The introduction of a scheme to encourage the retention and reinstatement of front garden fences, walls and significant hedges will be investigated. Consideration will be given to the feasibility of both grant aid and the use of enforcement powers.

Proposals for an economic development & regeneration strategy for the area

Historic building repair grants are available from both Charnwood Borough Council and Leicestershire County Council. Repair and reinstatement works to historic buildings that make a vital contribution to maintaining and improving the character of the conservation area are likely to be eligible for grant assistance.

A commercial premises grant scheme is also run by the council to improve the external appearance of buildings. An improvement in the appearance of an area through upgrading the buildings should lead to an overall increase in the number of people visiting, shops and restaurants, thus benefiting the commercial vitality of the area.

The Historic Building and Commercial Premises grant schemes are periodically reviewed to ensure that available grant aid is focused where it is most effective.

Strategy for the management & protection of important trees, greenery and green spaces;

The Biodiversity Action Plan sets out the Borough Council's priorities for conservation of a variety of wildlife and their habitats within Charnwood and details the actions required to ensure their wellbeing. The BAP will be reviewed and modified as required to ensure that the necessary actions are being taken by the appropriate agencies.

Queen's Park is the principal green space for the town and in the past it appears to have been a low priority in terms of funding. An application for Green Flag status is being pursued and this will address the areas of neglect within the park.

Proposals for an urban design and public realm framework

Bedford Square has been identified by the Character Appraisal as a poor quality urban space that is dominated by highway and car parking. Both the Town Centre Masterplan and its Public Realm Strategy, once adopted and implemented, will seek improvements in the quality of this public space.

The mature trees along Granby Street are a fundamental part of the character of this street and the protection and appropriate approach to maintenance of the trees is important. It is proposed that the Public Realm Strategy section of the Town Centre Masterplan will address this issue.

Monitoring change arrangements.

It is planned to review the conservation area character appraisal and its management plan every five years, although the management plan may under certain circumstances need to be reviewed over a shorter time period. A photographic record of the conservation area has been made and will be used to help identify the need to review how changes within the conservation area are managed. A greater degree of protection will be accomplished if the local community help monitor any changes.

Consideration of resources

This management plan sets out the commitment of the Borough Council to protecting the character and appearance of Queens Park Conservation Area and how it will use its resources to achieve these aims. Unfortunately, it is not possible to pursue all actions that may be seen as desirable but continued monitoring and review will help focus those resources so that they are used in the most effective way.

Timescale

Short Term (12 months)

- Submit buildings identified for 'Spot Listing'
- Formulate a scheme to protect and reinstate front garden fences, walls and significant hedges.
- Investigate the use of Article 4 powers to prevent the gradual erosion of the character of the area by alterations to windows, doors and front boundaries.

Medium Term (up to 3 years)

- Initial implementation of Town Centre Masterplan.
- Obtain 'Green Flag' status for Queen's Park.

Long Term (over 3 years)

- Implementation of Public Realm Strategy.

Within 5 years the Council will undertake a review of this Appraisal and Management Plan in full consultation with local residents, businesses and land owners. Circumstances may dictate that the review of the Management Plan is undertaken earlier.

Appendix I

Design

POLICY EV/1

The Borough Council will seek to ensure a high standard of design in all new developments. Planning permission will be granted for new development which:

- i. respects and enhances the local environment including the scale, location, character, form and function of existing settlements and the open and undeveloped nature of the countryside;
- ii. is of a design, layout, scale and mass compatible with the locality and any neighbouring buildings and spaces;
- iii. utilises materials appropriate to the locality;
- iv. provides positive and attractive built frontages to existing or proposed public spaces including roads, footpaths, waterways and areas of public open space;
- v. safeguards important viewpoints, landmarks and skylines;
- vi. uses the landform and existing features in and around the site, such as woodlands, trees, hedges, ponds, important buildings and structures imaginatively as the focus around which the new development is designed;
- vii. safeguards the amenities of adjoining properties, particularly the privacy and light enjoyed by adjoining residential areas;
- viii. meets the needs of all groups, including the disabled; and
- ix. minimises the opportunity for crime to create a safe and secure environment.

Nationally Important Archaeological Sites

POLICY EV/2

Planning permission will not be granted for development which would adversely affect a scheduled ancient monument or other nationally important archaeological site, or its setting.

Archaeological Sites of County and Local Significance

POLICY EV/3

Planning permission for development affecting known archaeological sites of county or local significance, will be granted provided the archaeological interest can be preserved in situ. Where this is not feasible or justifiable, the excavation and recording of the remains under the supervision of a professionally qualified archaeologist prior to development of that part of the site affected by the remains will be required.

Alterations or Extensions to Listed Buildings

POLICY EV/4

Planning permission for alterations or extensions to listed buildings, where required, will only be approved where the work is in keeping with the special architectural or historic interest of the building or its character or setting.

The Setting of Listed Buildings

POLICY EV/5

Planning permission for development which would adversely affect the setting of a listed building will be refused. In granting planning permission for development near to a listed building the Borough Council will impose such conditions as it considers necessary to protect the building's character and setting.

Change of Use of Listed Buildings

POLICY EV/6

Applications for the change of use of listed buildings to ensure their continued viability will be approved provided they are in keeping with the character, appearance and historic interest of the building. Applications must include full details of any proposed internal or external alterations to the building so that the effects on its character, appearance and setting can be fully assessed.

Demolition of Listed Buildings

POLICY EV/7

Planning permission for development involving the demolition of the whole or substantially all of a listed building will only be granted where it can be demonstrated to the Council's satisfaction that the condition of the building makes it impracticable to repair, renovate or adapt to a use which would ensure its retention.

Buildings of Local Historic or Architectural Interest

POLICY EV/8

Planning permission for development which would affect a building of local historic or architectural interest or its setting will be granted provided:

- I. the appearance or character of the building and its setting are safeguarded; or
- II. the development would result in significant local community or environmental benefits.

Historic Parks and Gardens

POLICY EV/9

Planning permission will not be granted for development which would have an adverse effect on the character or setting of the parks and gardens of historic or landscape significance as shown on the Proposals Map.

Development in Conservation Areas

POLICY EV/10

In determining planning applications for development in designated conservation areas the Council will preserve or enhance their special character or appearance by:

- x. refusing permission for development involving the demolition of buildings unless it can be demonstrated that their condition is such that their repair, renovation or adaptation would be impracticable or that their removal or replacement would enhance the appearance or character of the area;
- xi. requiring, where development would involve demolition, sufficient details of how the site will be treated, and of any scheme for redevelopment of the site, so that the effect of the proposal on the character of the conservation area can be properly assessed. Conditions may be imposed to ensure redevelopment commences as soon as practicable following demolition;
- xii. requiring the retention of materials, features and details of unlisted buildings or structures which contribute to the character of the conservation area;
- xiii. requiring the height, size, design, roofscape, plot width, visual appearance and materials used in any new development (including alterations and extensions to existing buildings) to respect the character of the surrounding area and make a positive contribution to the general character of the conservation area;
- xiv. requiring sufficient details of any proposal, including changes of use, so that the effect of the proposal on the character of the conservation area, both visually and in terms of any potential noise or other environmental intrusion, can be properly assessed. Detailed proposals may also be required on sensitive sites adjoining a conservation area. Alternatively design briefs will be prepared to guide development in the most sensitive locations;
- xv. retaining the historic street pattern, traditional buildings lines, open spaces of special character (including gardens), other spaces of public value, important trees and water features, footways, footpaths and kerblines which contribute to the character of a conservation area; and
- xvi. encouraging the redesign or replacement of buildings, structures and features which are visually detrimental to the character of a conservation area.

Advertisements

POLICY EV/11

Express consent for the display of advertisements and signs will be approved unless the proposal would be either:

- xvii. damaging to local amenities by reason of clutter, scale, siting, design or illumination; or
- xviii. dangerous to public safety through the introduction of signs likely to create a hazard by distracting or confusing road users.

Advertisements Above First Floor Level

POLICY EV/12

Express consent will not be granted for the display of advertisements above the level of first floor window sills where they would be poorly related to the building or surrounding buildings by reason of their scale or design.

Advertisements on Listed Buildings or in Conservation Areas

POLICY EV/13

Express consent to display advertisements and signs within conservation areas or on or close to a listed building will only be granted where:

- xix. the design, scale and siting of the sign would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area; and/or
- xx. the proposal would not adversely effect the special architectural or historic interest of a listed building or its character or setting.

Open Spaces of Special Character

POLICY EV/18

Planning permission will not be granted for development which would result in the loss of important areas of open land retained in public or private ownership which contribute to the character of a settlement either individually or as part of a wider network of open space.

Sites of National Ecological or Geological Importance

POLICY EV/21

Planning permission will not be granted for development which could adversely affect National Nature Reserves or Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's), proposed or designated for their ecological interest, unless an overriding national need can be shown which exceeds the level of importance for nature conservation and there is no alternative solution or other site suitable for that particular purpose.

For Sites of Special Scientific Interest proposed or designated for their geological interest, planning permission will not be granted for development which could have an adverse affect unless an overriding national need can be shown which exceeds the level of importance for nature conservation or a suitable substitute site of at least equal value can be proposed.

Sites of Regional, County and District Level Ecological or

Geological Importance

POLICY EV/22

Planning permission will not be granted for development which could adversely affect County and District level sites of ecological interest or Local Nature Reserves unless an overriding strategic need can be shown which exceeds the level of importance for nature conservation.

For Regionally Important Geological Sites and County and District level geological sites, planning permission will not be granted for development which could have an adverse affect unless an overriding strategic need can be shown which exceeds the level of importance for nature conservation or a suitable substitute site of at least equal value can be proposed.

Sites of Parish Level Ecological or Geological Importance

POLICY EV/23

Planning permission for development in and around parish level ecological and/or geological sites will not be granted unless measures are included to protect or compensate for valuable habitats or features damaged or destroyed during the development.

Landscape Features Important for Nature Conservation

POLICY EV/24

Planning permission for development which would affect a feature of the landscape of major importance for wild flora and fauna will be not be granted unless:

- xxi. the feature is safeguarded and retained within the development;
- xxii. its function as a linear and continuous corridor or stepping stone for migration, dispersal and genetic exchange is not diminished; and
- xxiii. a scheme for the management of the nature conservation interest is prepared.

Development and Features of Nature Conservation Interest

POLICY EV/25

Proposals for new development will be expected to include measures to conserve existing features of nature conservation interest and to include proposals for the creation of new habitats where appropriate.

Species Protection

POLICY EV/26

The Borough Council will not grant planning permission for a development that would have an adverse effect upon any site supporting badgers, bats and all other species protected by schedules 1, 5 and 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended, or Annex IV to the EC Habitats Directive unless measures are included in the proposal to protect the species and minimise any disturbance during development, or to provide for its transfer to an alternative site of equal value.

Satellite Television Dishes

POLICY EV/38

Proposals for satellite dishes which require planning permission will be acceptable provided the dish:

- xxiv. by reason of its size, colour, appearance and siting would not have a significant impact on the appearance of the building;
- xxv. would not be visually intrusive or damaging to the wider streetscene;
- xxvi. would not adversely affect the amenities of neighbouring properties;
- xxvii. would not lead to a clutter of dishes which collectively would detract from the character and appearance of the locality.

Use of Upper Floors

POLICY CA/11

Within Loughborough Town Centre and its associated service areas, district centres and local centres planning permission will be granted for the following uses (as defined by the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987) of upper floors, subject to the retention of residential amenities where adjacent property continues to be occupied:

- xxviii. shops (Class A1);
- xxix. financial and professional services (Class A2);
- xxx. food and drink uses (Class A3);
- xxxi. offices (Class B1(a));
- xxxii. dwellings (Class C3);
- xxxiii. non residential institutions (Class D1); and
- xxxiv. assembly and leisure uses (Class D2).

Planning permission for new built development within the centres listed above will be granted provided that the development is of a scale appropriate to the centre it seeks to serve, and subject to the provisions set out above and to the inclusion of positive proposals for the use of premises at first floor and above which will contribute to the vitality and viability of the centre. In particular elements of housing should be provided wherever possible.

Shop Front Design

POLICY CA/12

In granting planning permission for shop fronts in new buildings the Borough Council will require that they be designed as an integral part of the overall frontage having regard in particular to the style, materials and proportions of the building and to the overall character of the area.

Replacement shop fronts will be permitted provided they maintain or improve the appearance of the frontage into which they will be placed and relate well to surrounding buildings and the wider street scene. Shop fronts will be required to reflect the architectural composition of the existing frontage, particularly where a commercial ground floor user crosses several facades of differing character.

Shop Front Security

POLICY CA/13

Planning permission for the fitting of roller shutters and security grills will be granted provided that all the fittings are colour coated to match the shop front, designed to be unobtrusive during hours of business and allow visibility into the shop when in place.