



Heritage Action Zones
Historic England

GREAT WESTON CONSERVATION AREA

Conservation Area Appraisal
and Management Plan

2. MANAGEMENT GUIDANCE

Allies and Morrison
Urban Practitioners

Adopted 04 December 2018



Managing change



Like every historic town, Weston-super-Mare is constantly changing. Each decade adds new layers to the story of the town, leaving imprints in the physical fabric. The way in which change is managed will determine whether these layers add to the quality and character of the town or detract and undermine its success.

This management plan sets out a vision, a set of overarching principles and an action plan to help manage change across the Great Weston Conservation Area.

CHALLENGES

The appraisal of the Conservation Area has identified issues on a street-by-street basis. From this detailed work, a clear picture of some common issues across the Conservation Area has emerged. These common issues are:

<p>Inappropriate alterations and accretions</p>	<p>Poor quality conversions and subdivisions of former houses</p>	<p>Inferior quality modern additions</p>
<p>Loss of historic features (e.g. replacement with uPVC)</p>	<p>General maintenance of land / buildings</p>	<p>Poor quality and consistency of highway / footpath surfaces</p>
<p>Intrusive signage / or advertisements</p>	<p>Loss of / inappropriate boundary treatments (e.g. boundary walls)</p>	<p>Loss of front gardens to hard standing</p>

PRINCIPLES



Vision

Designating the Great Weston Conservation Area marks an important shift in how Weston-super-Mare sees itself. The latent local pride in the town is being re-awoken and the benchmark of what is expected in the town is being raised.

New design in the town must now match the established quality and character of Weston-super-Mare, and the adoption of new conservation areas and for the first time management plans, will provide the tools to halt the decline in quality and maintenance in parts of the town.

This change is embodied in a simple vision for the Conservation Area:

To use the special qualities and unique character of Weston as the basis for future change. To allow the town's heritage to empower the future.

All future change should be informed by local character - not in a pastiche or overly romantic way - but in a respectful and proud manner that continues Weston's legacy.

Principles

The principles set out here should steer all changes that happen in the town. Alongside these, there should be an emphasis on using the knowledge of local stakeholders to inform interventions.

1 CONTEXT AND SETTING

Every application must demonstrate a clear and informed understanding of the context and character which directly informs the proposal.

The importance of Weston's topography and views in and out of the Conservation Area should be recognised and given due weight.

2 STREETS

Each street should be considered as an entity. Proposed changes should take account of their effect on the street.

3 PUBLIC SPACE AND MOVEMENT

At the outset of any design proposals, the existing public realm and assets of an area should be assessed, with better use of both the priority. Existing public spaces should be enhanced at every opportunity.

Trees and green spaces play an important role in the character of the Conservation Area. All proposals should seek to respect and contribute to this character.

4 BUILDINGS

The contribution of existing buildings to the street should be enhanced as the result of proposed changes.

Opportunities to restore historic buildings or reinstate architectural features should be maximised.

Interventions, and particularly new development, should contribute to and help sustain the economic vitality of the town.

STRONG POLICY AND GUIDANCE

The backbone of managing change in any Conservation Area is the planning policy and guidance in place. The existing North Somerset policies provide a strong basis for managing change with a conservation and design-led approach.

Existing policy

The policy position for Weston-super-Mare is strong. A set of policies in the [Core Strategy](#) stress the importance of local character, identity and sense of place in informing interventions. These include **Policy CS5: Landscape and the historic environment** and **Policy CS12: Achieving high quality design and place-making**. The Development Management policies outline the policy approach on more detailed aspects including **Policy DM3: Conservation Areas**.

The review of existing policies has shown that the current plan provides all the hooks needed to protect and enhance the Conservation Area and outlines the high expectation for proposals for change in the town. In addition to these, the [Town Centre SPD](#) outlines the design requirements for any new development within the centre of the Conservation Area. Most importantly, these requirements includes the statement *"Development should respond to and express the distinct qualities, and urban form of the character area within which it is located."*

Given this strong policy base there are no immediate requirements for policy changes at this stage. Instead, the focus should be on strengthening the implementation of the policies through additional controls such as Article 4 Directions and establishing clear design guidance to support applications.

Policy DM3 includes the following strong statements: *"The Council will... Secure the retention of the existing features that contribute to its special character... ensure that new development will not cause harm to the existing character and appearance of the Conservation Area and wherever possible positively enhance it...repair harm caused through past unsympathetic development...ensure that development conforms to published guidance as set out within Conservation Area Character Appraisals and Management Plans...and where a Conservation Area contains buildings, features, structures or spaces which detract from its special character, development proposals which seek to mitigate these adverse impacts and enhance the character and appearance will be supported."*

Article 4 Directions

Article 4 Directions provide additional controls in particular areas, to require planning applications for changes such as new windows or doors. They enable local authorities to more closely manage changes in sensitive areas. The current Article 4 Directions in place across the town have been reviewed. At present the Directions do not provide adequate or appropriate protection for key parts of the Conservation Area. It is recommended that they are revised and relaunched, so as to provide a new, comprehensive and more easily understood set of controls.

The appraisal surveys have identified how changes to residential buildings and front gardens are having a detrimental impact in the Conservation Area. The surveys have highlighted that this is particularly a problem in the Hillside, Seafront and Whitecross character areas. It is recommended that a revised set of **Article 4 Directions** is established to cover the combined three character areas outside the town centre - Hillside, Seafront and Whitecross. These would cover the following aspects:

- Windows, doors and openings
- Boundary walls
- Forecourt treatment / gardens
- Chimney stacks

The nature of the land uses within the Town Centre area means there is already greater control on changes to features. For those parts of the town centre which are more residential there fewer opportunities to protect or re-instate the original features listed above.

Local list

In addition to improved Article 4 Directions, there could be scope for a [Local List](#) of historic buildings and other heritage assets to be established. Such a list would add a further layer of recognition for buildings which are locally and historically important to the town, but cannot be Listed at a national level (Grade I, II* or II). The wealth of research and street by street survey of the town undertaken as part of the wider Heritage Action Zone work should inform a draft list.

Design guidance

The Council have a number of guidance documents in place which provide more detailed advice on design in the area. Documents such as the [Residential Design Guides](#) are good resources which should be more widely used and communicated. It is recommended that these guides are reviewed regularly and any minor updates required undertaken.

There is a need for further guidance on shopfronts. Preparing and adopting **shopfront guidance** would have an important role in raising the quality of building facades along the high street and more widely in the Conservation Area. It is recommended that the Council draw on existing work and guidance in the immediate short term. This includes the recently commissioned Weston High Street draft design guide by the University of the West of England and shopfront design guidance from Historic England. The Council should prepare and adopt its own shopfront design guidance within the next 2 years. Further details on shopfront related actions are detailed in the Town Centre Character Area management section.

ACTION PLAN

This action plan sets out the priority issues for the Conservation Area and the actions to address these. This action plan will provide a focused set of tasks and opportunities to be explored and actioned over the next 5 years and beyond.

The Council and its partners are committed to protecting and enhancing the Conservation Area and emphasising the role of Weston's heritage in shaping its future. The focus is to be on prevention of the problems and issues as the most resource-efficient and sustainable strategy.

The actions include strengthening the planning controls and guidance, active investment in buildings and public space and wider projects and programmes to raise awareness and improve building crafts skills.

ISSUE	ACTION
Loss of historic features including inappropriate additions and poor quality conversions	Establish a revised set of Article 4 Directions
	Explore potential for Local List of historic buildings
	Review Residential Design Guides and make updates as necessary
	Seek to identify properties which could act as demonstration projects to show best practice in conversions, replacement windows and doors and maintenance of historic features ("Putting back the style" of a typical property eg mid-terrace).
	With delivery partners, develop opportunities for training in heritage renovation skills in the local area, and work to embed a high skills base in the local community to support high quality building work.
Poor quality shopfronts	Prepare shopfront guidance
	Shopfront improvement scheme to be established across core town centre retail streets
	Explore whether establishing an Area of Advertising and Shopfront Control would be helpful.
Awareness and engagement	Establish a programme for communicating and raising awareness about the Conservation Area and enhancement objectives.
	Review existing forums and stakeholder groups with a view to embedding responsibility for the Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plan into a town-wide forum.
	Establish a rolling monitoring programme which the above group will help facilitate.
	Understand the nature /extent of unauthorised works and introduce measures to rectify where possible and prevent further instances. Minimise potential for unauthorised work through a programme of awareness raising

WHERE - how wide an area does this action apply to?	WHO - main responsibility and partners	PRIORITY / TIMESCALE Short term - 1/2years Medium - 3/5 years Long term - 5 years plus
Hillside, Seafront and Whitecross areas	NSC	Short term
Great Weston Conservation Area wide	NSC, Historic England, Weston Civic Society	Medium term
District-wide	NSC	Short term
Conservation Area wide	Residential landowner	Short-medium term
District-wide	NSC with training providers and construction companies	Medium term
District-wide	NSC	Short term
Town centre area	NSC with Historic England and retailers	Short-medium term
Town centre	NSC	Medium term
Great Weston Conservation Area wide	Wide range of partners to be involved in helping to promote the Conservation Area programme including NSC departments, local amenity groups, Weston Town Council and Weston BID	Short term
Great Weston Conservation Area wide	Group will need to include a wide range of stakeholders and key partners	Short term
Great Weston Conservation Area wide	Wide range of partners including NSC, local amenity groups, Town Council, and BID	Establish in short term, ongoing action
Great Weston Conservation Area wide	NSC, Estate agents, contractors, solicitors, building owners	Short term

ISSUE	ACTION
Council website	Update existing Council web pages on Conservation Areas and Weston-super-Mare to include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a summary of landowners' responsibilities in relation to the Conservation Area designation - this should include references to maintenance; a refreshed section on what changes need planning permission and what do not; links to where design guidance can be found on how changes can be made sensitively; a new checklist setting out what to include in applications for permission for changes; and links to each section of the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan document alongside a short summary of what can be found in each section.
Poor quality infill / new developments	Maximise opportunities to illustrate best practice on publicly owned sites, in particular within the town centre Use the Design Review Forum to support the development of designs for key sites. Development should be steered by context and character and fully appreciate location. The result should be new benchmarks for future development in the town. Identify sites for new development or significant enhancement of existing buildings and engage with landowners
Poor quality public realm	Ensure the Council continues to appropriately manage trees in the Conservation Area Explore options for enhancement of public places, recognising the opportunity to significantly enhance public spaces and improve key connections between different parts of the town centre.
Vacancy and lack of activity	Encourage reuse of vacant upper floors in the town centre Encourage meanwhile uses and business start-up in vacant properties in the town centre
Structures listed on Historic England's 'Heritage at Risk' General maintenance of land / buildings	Review rescue and reuse plans for Birnbeck Pier

WHERE - how wide an area does this action apply to?	WHO - main responsibility and partners	PRIORITY / TIMESCALE Short term - 1/2years Medium - 3/5 years Long term - 5 years plus
Great Weston Conservation Area wide / District wide	NSC and partners	Short term
Great Weston Conservation Area wide	NSC and public sector partners	Short term and ongoing
Great Weston Conservation Area wide / District wide	NSC	Ongoing
Great Weston Conservation Area wide	NSC, landowners	Short-medium term
Great Weston Conservation Area wide / District wide	NSC	Ongoing
Town centre - site specific	NSC, LEP retail businesses, cycling and access interest groups	Short-medium term
Town centre	NSC, property owners	
Town centre	NSC, property owners	
Seafront area	Historic England, NSC, Birnbeck Pier Regeneration Trust	Short / medium term

COMMUNICATION AND AWARENESS

The Heritage Action Zone programme has kick started a renewed interest in the heritage of the town and revealed a real appetite for context-led enhancement and change. Building on this important work, there needs to be a communications strategy put in place to ensure all local residents and stakeholders are able to understand what the Great Weston Conservation Area designation means and how it will start to affect change and a wider programme of activities.

The primary aim should be awareness raising. This will continue the ground work laid down by the HAZ programme and the Conservation Area appraisal process itself.

Aspects to be considered as part of ongoing awareness raising are:

- communication of the Great Weston Conservation Area extent, its special character and objectives;
- communication of the implications for properties and sites within the Conservation Area and highlighting design guidance to support applications; and
- embedding the vision and principles for the Conservation Area within wider Council projects and programmes.

A number of the actions identified in the Action Plan will need to be underpinned by awareness raising. For example, the refresh of the Article 4 Directions will require an exercise to inform all property owners in the affected areas, and this could form part of a more comprehensive communication on the Conservation Area to make the wider public more aware of their local heritage assets and the aspects to be protected and enhanced.

The promotion of Weston's heritage generally should be continued and this will take many forms. From exhibitions and activities in the town, potential future heritage trails and walks, through to more significant interventions such as lighting strategies to highlight historic assets.

As an early step in the communication strategy for the Great Weston Conservation Area it is recommended that the existing **Council web pages** on Conservation Areas and Weston-super-Mare are updated to include the following:

- a summary of landowners' responsibilities in relation to the Conservation Area designation - this should include references to maintenance;
- a refreshed section on what changes need planning permission and what do not;
- links to where design guidance can be found on how changes can be made sensitively;
- a new checklist setting out what to include in applications for permission for changes; and
- links to each section of the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan document alongside a short summary of what can be found in each section.

