

Interim

**Planning
Guidance**

**Conservation Strategy
for Tamworth**



INTERIM PLANNING GUIDANCE

As part of the Local Plan process, supplementary planning guidance was prepared to supplement policies and proposals in the Local Plan. The Borough Council consulted the public on the guidance at the draft deposit and revised draft deposit stages of the Local Plan preparation process. Some of the comments on the Draft Deposit Guidance were taken into account in formulating the Revised Draft Guidance.

It was not appropriate for the Borough Council to adopt the guidance as supplementary planning guidance because this can only supplement an adopted local plan and the Tamworth Local Plan 2001-2011 will not be adopted until 2006. Furthermore, under the new development plan system, supplementary planning guidance has been replaced with supplementary planning documents.

This guidance was approved as interim planning guidance by the Borough Council's Cabinet on 15th August 2005. Appropriate guidance will be replaced with supplementary planning documents in due course. This is in accordance with the Council's Local Development Scheme that came into effect in March 2005.

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1 Introduction

Despite its reputation for development and change, Tamworth still retains many historic buildings that form part of its history. The conservation of such buildings maintains a sense of identity, which can often be built on to promote the successful regeneration of the area.

Government guidance provided through Planning Policy Guidance note 15 'Planning and the Historic Environment' states that:

'Conservation can itself play a key part in promoting economic prosperity by ensuring that an area offers attractive living and working conditions which will encourage inward investment – environmental quality is increasingly a key factor in many commercial decisions'.

The Borough Council developed an original conservation strategy in 1991, which provided 'the basis for the Borough Council's future role in the preservation and enhancement of Tamworth Town Centre's historic character'. Whilst this document has proved a useful reference in the intervening years, changes in both the town centre and the rest of the Borough have resulted in the need to review this original strategy.

This strategy's intent is to provide the basis for the Borough Council's future role in the preservation and enhancement of all the historic areas of the Borough considered to have characteristics worthy

of protection, not just focusing on the town centre. It also aims to encourage a new attitude towards the conservation of the built environment.

The strong legislative framework already in place has been backed up by funding and policy guidance from the Borough Council. This illustrates the Council's commitment to conservation, and the restoration and preservation of the historic elements of the area. Within the Borough Council, and with the public in general, conservation of the built environment is considered important and it is anticipated that this feeling will continue to develop in coming years.

The Conservation Strategy provides a focus for the Borough Council's wider policies for the conservation of the built environment. It also establishes a number of priority objectives identified overleaf and amplifies the Borough Council's policies for the conservation of the built environment as stated in the Tamworth Local Plan as a focus for conservation action during the forthcoming decade.

The success of the Conservation Strategy depends on the Borough Council's commitment to its policies, the future availability of resources to fund the conservation grant scheme, and the willingness of the local community to adopt standards that preserve and enhance the Conservation Areas' characters.

2. Overall Objectives

To secure more statutory protection for the historic elements of the Borough including additions and revisions to the statutory list

To prepare and update an index of the Borough's listed buildings, focusing on information relating to their condition, location, use and future

To prepare and update a register of locally important historic buildings, which although not included in the statutory list are of importance to Tamworth, assessing their condition, location, use and future

To positively encourage the restoration of listed buildings identified to be 'at risk' through the targeting of financial resources

To provide more guidance through personal advice and publications to applicants and owners of historic buildings, and buildings within conservation areas, regarding protection, maintenance and alterations

To provide comprehensive guidance for dealing with Listed Building applications and Conservation Area applications as experienced in the development control process

To review the existing Conservation Areas, and any additional areas for designation, so securing additional protection to unlisted but historically important buildings within the Borough

To secure the retention of trees within Conservation areas which make a positive contribution to the visual amenity of the area

To adopt a positive role towards archaeology with improvements to the existing records and preservation in situ of important archaeological deposits

To prepare and update a register of locally important historic landscapes, which although not included on the statutory list, are of importance to Tamworth, assessing their condition, location, use and possibilities for restoration

The ten objectives will provide the basis for the overall strategy of conservation in Tamworth so securing its heritage for future generations. An annual report will be presented to Council reviewing and monitoring progress, and updating and amending the objectives where appropriate.

3. Listed Buildings

The current statutory list of buildings considered to be of special architectural or historic interest within Tamworth was reviewed in 1990. The buildings included vary from the impressive Moat House, Lichfield Street to modest canal bridges and even a milestone.

Changing attitudes towards historic buildings seem to indicate that statutory lists, in future will be reviewed on a thematic basis, e.g. public houses, schools, etc and the Borough Council will be required to assist in any such review.

Preparatory work must be completed to ensure the Borough Council is prepared for any future re-survey. Information regarding buildings considered worthy of possible listing must also be gathered and forwarded to the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions.

Where buildings are considered to be of suitable historic merit and of local interest, and are at risk of demolition or alteration, the Borough Council will refer them to the

relevant Government listing branch for their consideration.

The promotion of good practice with owners and occupiers of listed buildings is of primary importance in developing and continuing proactive conservation within the Borough. Ensuring owners are aware of how best to care for their buildings is the first important step in promoting conservation and raising the profile of listed buildings. Planning Policy Guidance note 15 outlines how best to treat listed buildings in terms of alterations, extensions and uses. The Borough Council has produced advice notes explaining these guidelines and the legislation regulating all works to listed buildings.

The Borough Council will also continue to take a firm line in respect of enforcement action against unauthorised works to listed buildings.

4. Locally Important Buildings

The objective of a local list is to identify those buildings, which although not considered worthy of statutory listing in their own right, do contribute to the area in which they stand and are important in regard to the historical development of Tamworth.

The Council has prepared a list of buildings of local importance and the intention is to review this list when resources allow.

There are many buildings within the Borough that could be worthy of inclusion on a local list and the following criteria will be used in considering their suitability:

- Buildings and structures erected before 1840 which survive in largely original condition
- Buildings erected after 1840 which are
 - Good examples of their building materials and method
 - Constructed of unusual building materials or methods
 - Of good architectural design

- Designed or associated with a well known architect, engineer, etc., either nationally or locally
- Contribute significantly to the character of the area in which they stand
- Good examples of architectural unity, or have group value, e.g. terraces, squares, etc
- Important in terms of local history and the development of the area

It is essential to remember that a building included on a local list is not afforded the same protection as one that is statutorily listed, and unless it is within a conservation area, it has no legal protection from demolition or alteration. The list would be a record of historically interesting buildings within the Borough.

It will however be considered generally unacceptable to carry out works that would be harmful to buildings on the local list.

5. Buildings at Risk

The Borough Council maintains a register of the condition of all listed buildings in the Borough which is reviewed every 3 to 5 years. This survey identifies certain buildings within the Borough considered to be 'at risk'. Information collected related to the location, condition, ownership and use of all listed buildings within the Borough is passed to English Heritage who include it in their national survey.

Financial aid towards restoration work for these buildings is seen as a priority of the Conservation Grant Scheme.

The promotion of listed buildings that are vacant, with a view to increasing awareness of their potential is a priority of

conservation work. It is essential that listed buildings are kept in use, even if this means finding a temporary occupier. This will reduce the risk of attack from vandalism and the theft of building materials, and the deterioration of the fabric of the building.

Depending on the availability of resources the Borough Council will consider extending the Buildings at Risk Survey to buildings held on the Local List.

6. Advice to the Public

There is still a lack of knowledge about both listed buildings and conservation areas. The Council has produced a series of advice notes regarding shop fronts, signs, security and general repairs to listed and historically important and interesting buildings. The Council considers the availability of professional and expert conservation staff essential to the provision of a high standard of service to the general public.

The Council has also produced a series of Statements for each of the 7 conservation areas which provide information specifically relating to each conservation area, its character and appearance, the reasons for its designation and guidelines for new development.

7. Conservation Areas

There are now 7 Conservation Areas within the Borough, each with its own distinctive character and appearance. The boundaries of all these conservation areas have been reviewed and updated where appropriate. It is intended to continue to monitor changes within and surrounding designated areas, and amend boundaries as necessary.

Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 'Planning and the Historic Environment' states that simply designating a conservation area will not ensure its protection. The Council needs to clearly assess and define what it is about each area that makes it special and the action needed to protect and manage it. The Council is required to undertake a character appraisal for each conservation area and to keep them under regular review. The appraisals will inform policies in local development documents.

In addition, other areas have in the past been identified for consideration as conservation areas. These have included Macgregor Park and Glascote village. This ongoing review of historic areas should continue and in the first instance consider the canal system for designation. Proposals to designate additional conservation areas will involve the local community in order to gain public support and raise understanding of conservation issues. The areas under consideration will

be surveyed in detail and the results reported to committee, with recommendations included on their potential suitability for designation as new conservation areas.

The existing conservation areas, having been designated must be preserved and enhanced wherever possible. The character of these areas depends on both buildings and the areas around them, since it is these that are crucial to the quality of the environment. The conservation area character appraisal will be vitally important to identify special character and opportunities for enhancement.

In order to improve these areas, the following issues must be addressed:

Gaps in the Townscape

In the past, important frontages within the conservation areas have been damaged by the removal of buildings, the result being a disjointed street scene. These sites are to be identified with a view to re-establish the original sense of enclosure through the actual restoration of a frontage through redevelopment, or the use of landscaping or suitably detailed boundary treatments.

Vistas within and into Conservation Areas

Views of the main buildings and focal spaces within the conservation areas should be protected from insensitive development. Development should take into account the character of the conservation area in which it stands. High standards of design are expected from any new development or alteration. Landscaping programmes should also be identified to ensure the character of certain sections of the designated areas is protected.

Advertisements

Advertisements can potentially have a damaging effect on the character of conservation areas and this is particularly true in the town centre. However the needs of the business community must also be considered.

The Council has produced a guidance note on sign designs and the various approaches to advertisements that the Borough Council considers to be acceptable. As part of the promotion and enhancement of conservation within the Borough, the Council will seek the removal of existing advertisements that are especially harmful to the areas' character.

Floorscape

Surface treatment makes a significant impact on the overall appearance of conservation areas, and although much of the town centre resurfacing has already been completed during the pedestrianisation scheme, much work remains to be done.

Traditional surfaces and layouts should be retained wherever possible, or re-introduced where there is evidence for them. It is important to retain the relationship between footways and carriageways, including kerblines. Wall to wall surfaces are best avoided and the scale, texture, colour and laying pattern of new materials should be sympathetic to the setting.

The use of asphalt with a rolled bound gravel top could be used as an alternative to tarmac or block paving, with stone setts and flags used where funding allows. Areas where such materials would be sought will be identified and schemes negotiated whenever maintenance or resurfacing work is being carried out.

Street Furniture

Street furniture can often make a vital contribution to the appearance of conservation areas. Locally distinctive items such as pillar-boxes telephone kiosks and railings should be preserved wherever possible.

Road signs and markings can also have a significant impact and should be of an appropriate character and quality. Government guidance provided in PPG15 states that wherever possible signs should be fixed to existing posts or street furniture. Redundant signs should be removed to eliminate clutter.

Regular street furniture audits are useful in establishing which, if any are surplus to requirements. The Department of Transport's Traffic Signs manual provides a degree of flexibility within historic areas and the Borough Council will take advantage of this in these areas.

8. Trees in Conservation Areas

Trees are valued features within Tamworth both in the town centre and in the outlying areas. They make an important contribution to the character of the local environment and the Borough Council has the power to protect trees in an attempt to preserve both them and the character they contribute to the area. This is done through a combination of planning conditions and tree preservation orders.

which are not the subject of tree preservation orders are subject to special protection.

Anyone proposing to cut down, lop or top such a tree must give 6 weeks notice to the Borough Council who then consider bringing the tree under their control by making a tree preservation order. In their consideration, the Borough Council will seek to secure the retention and appropriate management of trees of particular merit throughout the Borough.

In addition to these controls and in view of the contribution trees make to the character and appearance of conservation areas, all trees in conservation areas

9. Archaeology

Archaeological remains are irreplaceable and often extremely vulnerable. Tamworth has a considerable wealth of such remains and it is vital to appreciate their importance, and make provision for thorough excavation and recording of the site, where they are threatened by development. In Tamworth remains help to explain the town's development from

the times of Offa and Ethelfleda. These remains are finite, non-renewable and highly fragile.

The ultimate aim of the strategy regarding archaeology is to preserve in situ, all important surviving archaeological deposits and structures. Where physical preservation is not feasible, an

archaeological excavation for the purposes of 'preservation by record' may be an acceptable alternative.

Planning Policy Guidance note 16 'Archaeology and Planning' provides guidance on dealing with archaeological remains. To supplement this the Borough Council also calls on the expertise of the County Archaeologist when dealing with all matters involving archaeological remains or suspected sites of importance. Where

a site is considered to have some archaeological significance, decisions on applications will be made only on the basis of an evaluation of the site's importance, provided by the applicant. Those areas considered to be of archaeological importance throughout the Borough will be identified to supplement those plans already held by the Borough Council.

10. Historic Landscapes

The need to recognise the importance of historic landscapes within the environment is becoming increasingly accepted. To date little research has been undertaken in Tamworth to establish which areas are of importance and worthy of some form of protection. Historic landscapes include parks, gardens and designed landscapes, and areas of noteworthy archaeological features, fields and field boundaries and the setting of historically important buildings. The Borough Council recognises the importance of establishing such areas within the landscape and is committed to protecting those of value and encouraging their repair, restoration and enhancement where appropriate.

A Historic Landscape Characterisation of the whole county is being undertaken by Staffordshire County Council and English Heritage. The aim is to characterise the landscape as it exists today by identifying and understanding the human influences

that have created it. The exercise will enable an understanding of the development and character of the modern landscape.

Until areas of importance are established and researched, developers should consider the possible impact of proposals on land which may have a historic value, and where appropriate liaise with the Borough Council to assess possible implications of development works, and it will generally be considered unacceptable to carry out works which would adversely impact on those areas considered to be of historic and landscape value.

11. Securing Resources

The Borough Council is committed to operating a Conservation Grant designed to improve the condition of the Borough's historical buildings and to enhance their external appearance. This Conservation Grant is applicable within all conservation areas, and to listed buildings outside the designated areas. Wherever possible, the scheme is aimed at restoring original historical features and can assist listed buildings, unlisted buildings in conservation areas, and environmental

enhancement work within conservation areas. Since the creation of this grant scheme, considerable interest has been shown with an encouraging number of grant applications received and approved.

Where possible, other sources of funding will also be sought to supplement this grant scheme in an attempt to maximise the improvements seen within the historic environment.

12. Monitoring

All initiatives identified in the strategy will be subject to regular monitoring to ensure they are meeting the general objectives. Successes and changes can then be identified as they occur. It is an objective of the overall strategy that an annual report will be presented to committee

reviewing and monitoring the progress of the strategy and its objectives. The se objectives will also be updated and amended as appropriate from time to time.