

Interim Planning Guidance

Victoria Road/Albert Road
Conservation Area
Statement of Designation
& Reasoned Justification

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 Some of the comments on the Draft Deposit Guidance were taken into account in formulating the Revised Draft Guidance.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. It contains information about the special character of the Victoria Road/Albert Road Conservation Area, a justification for its designation and guidelines for development. 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

A Conservation Area is an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is important to preserve or enhance. The Borough Council has a duty to decide which areas are special and fall into this category, and these are then designated as conservation areas. It is not only the individual buildings but also the way in which they are situated and the surrounding areas that give an area its character.

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provides the legislative backing for such designations, stating that:

'Every Local Planning Authority should from time to time determine which parts of their area are of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve and enhance, and shall designate those areas as conservation areas.'

It also imposes a duty on Local Authorities to review their areas from time to time. The original Town Centre Conservation Area was designated in 1976. In addition to the commercial heart of the town, it also included the more residential areas of Victoria Road and Albert Road. A comprehensive review of the boundary and the reasoned justification for the

designation was carried out and it was decided that the fundamentally different character of the two areas should be recognised by the designation of two separate conservation areas. The needs of each area differ and with separate designations these needs can be identified and considered on their own merits through separate Conservation Strategies.

The revised designations were presented to and approved by the Borough Council's Planning Committee on the 11th October 1994.

2. THE NEED FOR CONSERVATION

The development of Tamworth as a whole dates back possibly as far as the Iron Age, and it has experienced sporadic growth ever since. The development of the railway through the town played an important role in the growth of residential areas adjacent to the town centre, with the principal streets of Albert Road and Victoria Road constructed at the expense of the owners of the Birmingham and Derby Junction Railway.

The mainly residential area has retained much of its original character despite a recent increase in demand for office space and provides an important example of the Victorian development of Tamworth. Most properties date from the Victorian era and consist of suburban terraced development, along wide tree lined highways. The overall character is one which could be

considered as pleasantly evocative and the properties, some converted to offices, generally retain their original character and dignity. The area also contains a number of vacant sites, which have been redeveloped during the past thirty years. It is important to ensure that any further redevelopment respects the character of the original development.

The aims of the designation are not confined to keeping areas and buildings pleasant to look at, or as a record of some aspect of history. They must involve the continuing life and function of the area, and be receptive to change. Much of the intrinsic quality of the area is the product of changing social and economic attitudes spanning a considerable period of time. To interrupt this by curtailing new development or insisting on rigid limitations will only serve to call into question the future validity of such areas for residential and commercial interests alike.

In designating the Victoria Road/ Albert Road Conservation Area, the Borough Council has therefore recognised the demands of progress and preservation. Conservation to be effective requires the commitment of a wide range of interests in the community. In this respect the enthusiastic works of both the Tamworth Civic Society and Conservation Area Advisory Committee are welcomed by the Borough Council.

3. CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARIES

The conservation area is located to the north east of the town centre incorporating much of the residential development which occurred in Victorian times as a direct result of the completion of the railway.

To the north the boundary begins along Albert Road, a tree lined avenue originally dedicated to residential use but now much changed to office use. To the rear of Albert Road, Rosy Cross remains residential and as such provides an interesting area of development within this central area. At the junction of Albert Road and Offa Drive, adjacent to the railway station, the boundary follows Victoria Road. Another primarily residential road, this Victorian tree lined avenue also has succumbed to the pressures of need for office space. The boundary also incorporates Albion Street and Marmion Street, both of which lie at right angles to Victoria Road. Dated terraces on both streets make these otherwise standard Victorian residential developments interesting. The conservation area ends at the junction of Victoria Road and Mill Lane, after which much of the development is commercial and included in the Town Centre Conservation Area.

The Victoria Road/ Albert Road Conservation Area as the name suggests is based around the Victorian residential

development of Albert Road and Victoria Road, which was developed as a direct result of the completion of the railway through the town. Victoria Road itself was made at the expense of the company to whom the Birmingham and Derby Junction Railway belonged. At the time of its construction it was described as a neat and wide road, and promised to form an important street if well maintained. After the visit of Queen Victoria during 1843, it was decided to name these streets in her honour.

The boundary has therefore been designated to preserve this Victorian development and street pattern, and to include those properties that provide an important historical record of the development of Tamworth during Victoria Era and marks the historically important visit of Queen Victoria to the town.

4. REASONED JUSTIFICATION

Conservation area status emphasises the importance of the Victorian development of the town and illustrates the acceptance of the individual character of this section of the town centre. It is intended to protect the special architectural and historic character of the buildings and their settings, and goes some way to promoting the area as a separate entity from the commercial centre of the town.

The designation gives a more positive context to the restoration of older

properties of character and owners and occupiers should be more confident that retention, repair and restoration of the original buildings and their appearance is worthwhile.

Conservation Area status also justifies the formulation of stricter policies to control the design and form of any development. It protects the original street pattern, which is of the utmost importance when considering the original development of the area.

5. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Although Tamworth as a whole has developed over some 2000 years the section of the central area adjacent to the railway station forms a separate entity, clearly definable and obviously dating primarily from the Victorian era.

The formation of the Birmingham and Derby junction Railway and the projecting lines were seen as a certain way to give a fresh impulse and new direction to industry and business. It was thought that the inevitable increase in the population of Tamworth, brought about by the passing of time, would undoubtedly obtain profitable employment in trades developing as a result of the railway.

The new roads formed from the end of George Street to the station were made at the expense of the company to whom the line belonged for the convenience of

passengers. The terraced residential properties, which line these streets date generally from the late 1800's and with the exception of a small number of cleared sites, the area retains much of its original character.

6. EXISTING CHARACTER OF VICTORIA ROAD AND ALBERT ROAD

The Victoria Road/ Albert Road Conservation Area was originally predominantly residential, although in more recent times, pressure for office space has resulted in some changes of use to small businesses, along both Albert Road and the western part of Victoria Road.

The area is characterised by Victorian terraces, many of which are named and dated individually. On Marmion Street, Mable Terrace dates from 1885, while Albion Street is made up of Victoria Terrace and Albion Place dated 1889. Using these dates it is clear how the area developed. There is a definite feeling that the area was planned to provide formal links to the railway station from the commercial centre.

The remaining street pattern is extremely important and remains fundamentally the same as at the original time of construction. The tree-lined avenues have now come to maturity and form a clear path to the station, and with the inter-linking streets of Marmion Street and

Albion Street the Conservation Area as whole forms a 'A' shape.

7. EXISTING LAND USES AND CHARACTER

There are a number of main land uses within the Conservation Area

1. Residential Area

The area was originally conceived as a residential one close to the town's commercial heart. Terraced properties line the major streets within the Conservation Area, many of which are tree lined providing a pleasant atmosphere. Many terraces are named and dated individually, with small walled gardens to the front and larger gardens to the rear. The overall character is one of the domestic scale with an underlying feeling of prosperity and maturity.

2. Office and Small Business

Recently the area has come under increasing pressure to provide office space. The transformation of many residential properties to meet the needs of this demand has resulted in a change in the character of the area. The front gardens which would originally have been walled, have been cleared and opened to provide additional car parking, and although the external appearance of the buildings remain largely unaltered, the character of the residential street has been somewhat lost. Streets worst affected are Albert Road and Victoria Road.

3. Open Space

Throughout the Conservation Area, several sites have been cleared and now provide public open space and car parking areas. The corners of Marmion Street and Albert Road are particularly affected by car parking, while the front areas of the Youth Employment Services building on Albert Road provide grassed open space. The redevelopment of these sites in the future would be desirable, and the design of any new building must be carefully considered, as it would have a considerable impact on the Conservation Area as a whole.

8. DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

The need to appreciate and conserve the existing built environment does not preclude new development. Potential exists to develop some sites within the conservation area and the intention is therefore to provide guidance that will accommodate flexibility in design while maintaining the essential character of the conservation area.

1. New Development

It is not practical here to give design guidance relating to each situation that might arise. However the broad principle can be established that new development should seek to compliment the domestic scale prominent throughout the area and the existing properties in terms of scale, form, proportion, massing and elevational treatment.

2. Refurbishment and Conversion

The refurbishment and conversion of existing properties is becoming increasingly important as properties age and essential repairs become necessary. The Borough Council would seek to encourage the retention of the historical characteristics that are important within the conservation area. There should be a presumption against the removal of boundary walls that add much to the overall feeling of enclosure. Emphasis should therefore be placed on the retention and restoration of individual architectural features that give each building its individual character.

3. Commercial Fronts

Attractive building facades and shop fronts are an important advertisement for the area and can enhance its overall character. In its consideration of commercial frontages, the Borough Council will seek to promote the individual character of buildings. Every effort will be made to achieve a proper balance between the visual amenity of the area and the commercial needs of businesses to advertise effectively.

The Borough Council will seek to ensure that the design of commercial fronts and fascias do not obscure any noteworthy structural or architectural elements. The new elements should compliment the existing elevation in terms of materials, their quality and in the use of colour.

4. New Materials

The use of new materials and elevational treatments can have an interesting effect on building elevations and often determine whether alterations will be acceptable or not.

The colour, pattern and texture of materials in many cases make the difference between success and failure. The uses of brightly coloured or strongly moulded modern materials are rarely successful and should be avoided. Materials which contrast with traditional materials used in older buildings should also be avoided.

The principle should also be employed when looking at roadway and footway surfacing. Although tarmac seems the only option for the road surface, the retention of original materials on footways should be encouraged wherever possible, and where original materials have been removed in the past, new works or repair works should seek to replace original materials wherever possible.

5. Advertisements and Signage

There are a number of commercial premises within the conservation area, particularly along Victoria Road and Albert Road. These generally comprise professional and financial services although there are also several retail shops and public houses. These businesses will wish to advertise their products and services by way of a window display or some form of signage.

Advertisements and signs have a significant effect on visual amenity and it is particularly important within a conservation area to ensure that the special character and appearance of the area is protected and enhanced. To this end, there are a number of guidelines to bear in mind when considering signage:

- The number of signs on an individual property should be strictly limited to avoid clutter.
- Advertising signs will generally not be permitted above ground floor level unless relating to separate upper floor uses. In these instances, consider a nameplate by the entrance. Alternatively, discreet black or gold lettering or opaque transfers applied directly to the windowpanes may be acceptable.
- Where there are a number of occupiers of a building, a single nameplate with all the businesses listed is preferable to separate signs.
- Relate the proportions of a sign to the elevation on which it is mounted and keep the amount of information on a sign to a minimum.
- Use traditional materials such as timber wherever possible. Handpainted signs are most suitable but individual letters applied to an opaque or dark background will normally be acceptable.
- Lighting brackets or wash lighting is more acceptable than an internally illuminated fascia sign. Signs

consisting of halo illuminated individual letters on an opaque or solid background will normally be acceptable. Illuminated hanging signs are generally only considered appropriate for restaurants and public houses.

6. Car Parking

The conservation area is predominantly residential with much residential parking taking place on the street. Some properties, notably along Victoria Road, have had the front garden walls removed to facilitate off-road parking. Although this has a practical benefit, the character of the area can be eroded through the loss of traditional features of enclosure such as walls, gates and fences. Visitor and business parking can be problematic and given the proximity of the town centre public car parks, encouragement should be given to make full use of public car parks.

7. Tree Protection

The retention of existing mature trees throughout the Conservation Area should be considered as primarily important when looking at any proposed works. Existing trees add much to the mature character of the area and any application to remove them should be discouraged as a matter of priority.