

9.0 MANAGEMENT PLAN

As indicated in Section 1.0 above, this section sets out a proposed management plan for the four Conservation Areas in Leigh. These proposals should be read in conjunction with the respective appraisals of the designated areas, and also with the relevant planning policies from the Wigan Replacement Unitary Development Plan, which are summarised below.

The proposals are intended to:

- preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Areas;
- manage the process of change without compromising the historic environment, and;
- consider enhancements to the areas.

The following Unitary Development Plan (UDP) policies apply to the Conservation Areas (and are set out in full in Appendix 2):

- EV3 DESIGN
 - EV3A Design and New Development
 - EV3B Advertisements
 - EV3C Design of Frontages to Shops and Commercial Premises
 - EV3F The River Douglas, Canal Network and Other Water Features
 - C1F The River Douglas, Canal Network and Other Water Features
- EV4 CONSERVATION
 - EV4A Development and Design in Conservation Areas

- EV4B Listed Buildings
- EV4C Buildings and Structures of Local Architectural or Historic Interest

The management plan itself is divided into two sections: Section 10.0 sets out proposals for the preservation of the special interest of the Conservation Areas, and; Section 11.0 relates to general proposals for enhancement.

10.0 PRESERVATION

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990, and other pieces of planning legislation, contain various powers that assist local planning authorities in their responsibility to preserve the character and appearance of Conservation Areas.

10.1 Demolition of buildings

Section 74 of the Act provides for control over the demolition of unlisted buildings in Conservation Areas, subject to various criteria. Paragraph 4.27 of PPG 15: *Planning and the Historic Environment* indicates that the 'general presumption should be in favour of retaining buildings that make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a Conservation Area.' It goes on to indicate that proposals to demolish such buildings should be assessed against the same broad criteria as proposals to demolish listed buildings.

The Conservation Areas contain a number of listed buildings, which are included on the statutory list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest, and these are detailed in

Appendix 1. The demolition or alteration of such buildings is controlled by the provisions of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

10.2 Trees

Anyone proposing to cut down, top or lop a tree in a Conservation Area must give six weeks notice to the local planning authority. The purpose of this requirement is to give the authority an opportunity to make a Tree Preservation Order, if it is deemed necessary.

Although trees are not present in the more urban parts of the Leigh Conservation Areas, there are nonetheless places elsewhere where they make a very positive contribution, for example, along the Bridgewater Canal, and within several church grounds. At the time of writing, no trees in the areas are covered by Tree Preservation Orders. However, it is recommended that the Council undertake a comprehensive tree survey within the Conservation Areas and their immediate settings, to determine whether any Tree Preservation Orders should be made.

10.3 Land Use

The character of the four Conservation Areas relies in large part upon the existing pattern of land uses established within the appraisals. In some areas, there appears to be low demand for retail floor space on secondary street frontages, for example, Railway Road, the southern end of King Street, and the eastern end of Bradshawgate. There may be opportunities to seek the re-use of former shops in peripheral

locations by encouraging complementary alternative uses, including professional services.

It is important, however, that purpose built retail buildings on principal street frontages, such as Market Street and Bradshawgate, are retained in retail use to preserve the vitality of the commercial areas. Applications for changes of use should demonstrate how they have taken into account surrounding uses and the balance of uses in the wider area.

Finding new uses for the mill buildings around the canal area can be difficult, often due to their size and complexity. As many of them are listed, however, it is important that every effort be made to encourage their viable re-use.

10.4 Minor Alterations

Any work that materially affects the external appearance of a building requires planning permission, subject to 'permitted development' rights. Under normal planning control, certain works are classified as permitted development and therefore do not require planning permission. This includes small alterations and extensions to dwelling houses, the erection of buildings, enclosures or structures required for a purpose incidental to the enjoyment of the dwelling house, for example, a swimming pool, the provision of hard surfaces, and the erection of and alterations to boundaries.

Within Conservation Areas, the range of permitted development rights is more limited than in other areas. As a result, a number of minor alterations need planning permission, for example: various types of cladding; the

insertion of dormer windows, and; the erection of satellite dishes on walls, roofs and chimneys fronting a highway. Also, the size of extensions that may be erected without specific planning permission within Conservation Areas is more restricted.

The traditional materials used for the external walls of buildings establish the appearance of the Conservation Area. Within Leigh, these are primarily red brick, with a lesser number of buildings constructed of stone. It is important to retain the consistency and unity of buildings that were designed either as a pair or a terrace by resisting proposals to render, paint or otherwise alter individual buildings within a designed group.

Small dormer windows are a feature of some of the building types within the Conservation Areas to achieve space and light within the attic space. However, the introduction of inappropriate dormers of either a large-scale or non-traditional design, particularly on terraced properties, should be resisted.

The widespread erection of satellite dishes and radio equipment on buildings also has a detrimental impact on the appearance of the Conservation Areas, and should be controlled.

Extensions to historic buildings can have a considerable impact on the character of historic buildings. This is especially the case in rows of buildings that have been designed as set terraces. Any extension that would disrupt the architectural unity of a terrace should be resisted. However, there are instances where extensions will be

deemed acceptable in principle, and these should be subordinate to the building to which they are attached, should use similar or complimentary materials, and should reflect or complement its style and appearance. Generally speaking, extensions at the side or rear are to be preferred, except where these elevations have also been carefully designed, or are open to public view.

10.5 Article 4 Directions

Local planning authorities may remove, or apply for approval to remove, permitted development rights by way of an Article 4 Direction. This means that certain developments to dwelling houses that previously did not require a planning application to be submitted, would be brought under the control of the Council and would need planning permission.

The effect of alterations that are possible under permitted development rights, such as the erection of extensions, the replacement of doors and windows, and the removal of boundary walls, have already damaged the character and appearance of all the Conservation Areas. Examples of areas that have been affected are the terraces of housing at The Avenue, in the Leigh Town Centre Conservation Area, and Rothay Street/Severn Street, in the Bridgewater Conservation Area. The cumulative effect of further alterations of this nature will seriously erode the special qualities of the Conservation Areas, which are the reason for their designation.

It is therefore recommended that the Council consider an Article 4 Direction, removing permitted development rights from dwelling houses within the Conservation Areas.

11.0 ENHANCEMENT

In addition to their responsibility for the preservation of Conservation Areas, local planning authorities are also required to propose policies and actions that will lead to their enhancement. This can be achieved through both the development control process and by proposing specific actions.

Within Conservation Areas, all proposals for development should be regarded as opportunities to enhance the character and appearance of the designated areas. It is therefore important for full details, including detailed plans, sections, elevations and landscape proposals, to be available as part of a planning application.

11.1 Trees

Trees have been identified as being important features of the Conservation Areas, but they inevitably mature and die, or can become damaged or diseased. Therefore, every effort should be made to provide for new and replacement tree planting within proposed new developments.

Also, it is recommended that the Council should consider the maintenance and replacement of the trees within pavements, which are a feature, for example, along The Avenue and in the Civic Square.

The urban character of the streetscape within the areas presents little opportunity for tree planting or soft landscaping, except within private spaces. The introduction of exotic or ornamental planting, even of an informal character, is historically inappropriate within Leigh, and serves to erode the special character of the street.

11.2 Boundary walls

Similarly, boundary walls are important features of the Conservation Areas but they have been removed from some properties, for example, on Railway Road. Therefore every opportunity should be made to provide or restore walls to property boundaries. It is recommended that the Council survey the Conservation Areas, noting where historic boundary walls still exist, and where they have been removed. Owners should be encouraged to retain the existing walls, and to reinstate boundary walls if possible.

11.3 Reinstatement of architectural features

Many historic buildings in the Conservation Areas have lost their original doors, windows, shop fronts, and other features. As a result, their architectural character has been eroded, together with that of the wider area. As proposals come forward for the alterations and extensions to these buildings, there may be an opportunity to encourage the reinstatement of such features.

In order to encourage the reinstatement or repair of original features, it is recommended that the Council consider sources

of financial support for works to reinstate or repair original features.

11.4 Commercial frontages

There are a substantial number of commercial frontages throughout the four Conservation Areas. Many of these have poorly considered shop fronts and signage which detract from the character and appearance of the area. It is recommended that the Council consider resources of financial support for works to reinstate or repair traditional shop fronts.

11.5 Street furniture

An honest and robust approach should be taken in the selection of new street furniture to avoid the creation of spurious 'heritage'. Any additions must be justified and restricted to essential items. The siting of new features in the public realm must be afforded careful consideration with regard to views, vistas, and the setting of buildings, particularly those identified as making a positive contribution to the townscape. It is recommended that the Council prepare design guidance for appropriate street furniture in the Conservation Areas.

11.6 Monitoring and review

This document should be reviewed every five years in the light of the Local Development Framework and emerging government policy. A review should include the following:

- A survey of the Conservation Area;

- A photographic record of the Conservation Area;
- An assessment of whether the various recommendations detailed in this document have been acted upon, including proposed enhancements;
- A building condition survey;
- The production of a short report detailing the findings of the survey and any necessary action.