

1. Background

1.1 Current status of Conservation Area

The Ashton-in-Makerfield Conservation Area was adopted by Council in December 1989. The designated boundary includes an area of 7.32 ha. and is characterised as a Historic Town Centre. The plan identifies the boundary and the Listed Buildings within the area.

1.2 Statutory background

Conservation Areas were introduced by the Civic Amenities Act 1967 and are defined as “areas of special architectural or historic interest the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”. Conservation Area designation is more dependent on the overall quality and interest of an area, rather than individual buildings, although it is common for such areas to contain a number of Listed Buildings.

Designation as a conservation area has a number of implications. Most importantly, the Local Authority is required to give special attention to preserving and enhancing the conservation area in exercising its planning functions. Also, planning consent must be gained for certain types of development which are elsewhere classified as permitted development, such as various types of cladding, dormer windows, satellite dishes and radio masts/antennae. Consent is further required for the demolition of buildings within conservation areas. Designation also brings controls over works to trees.

The protection of an area does not end with conservation area designation. PPG15 “Planning and the Historic Environment” urges Local Authorities to prepare detailed assessments of the special interest, character and appearance of their conservation areas. A character appraisal defines and analyses the special qualities and the architectural and historic interest that warranted the conservation area designation. PPG15 states that “the more clearly the special architectural or historic interest that justifies designation is defined and recorded, the sounder will be the basis for local plan policies and development control decisions, as well as for the formulation of proposals for the preservation and enhancement of the character or appearance of an area”. Character appraisals should therefore provide a framework against which development proposals can be assessed for their appropriateness in the historic environment.

Local Authorities are under a duty from time to time to “formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas” (Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas (LBCA)) Act 1990, s.71).



1.3 Planning policy framework

The Wigan Revised Deposit Draft Replacement Unitary Development Plan – Feb 2004 emphasises the need to conserve the best of the built environment and the policies aim to enhance and protect the heritage of the Borough and their settings while supporting the reuse of old buildings.

Conservation Policy EV4 states that:

The Council will conserve the historic built environment by:

- A. NOT PERMITTING PROPOSALS WHICH WOULD HARM THE CHARACTER OR APPEARANCE OF LISTED BUILDINGS OR THEIR SETTINGS, NOR PROPOSALS WHICH FAIL TO PRESERVE OR ENHANCE THE CHARACTER OR APPEARANCE OF A CONSERVATION AREA;
- B. PROTECTING AND ENHANCING THE CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE OF ANCIENT MONUMENTS, SITES, BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTEREST AND HISTORIC LANDSCAPES;
- C. EXERCISING ITS NORMAL DEVELOPMENT CONTROL POWERS TO ENCOURAGE THE PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF BUILDINGS OF LOCAL INTEREST;
- D. ENCOURAGING THE OCCUPATION OF OLD BUILDINGS AND PERMITTING NEW USES WHICH ARE COMPATIBLE WITH THEIR CHARACTER AND SETTING;
- E. CARRYING OUT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES IN CONSERVATION AREAS.

These policies are further expanded in Policies EV4A/EV4B/EV4C/EV4D/EV4E (see Appendix)

1.4 Purpose of the Conservation Area appraisal

The Ashton-in-Makerfield Conservation Area Appraisal has been prepared in response to the guidance outlined above and, as such, discharges the Council's obligations and duties under the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990, as well as complying with English Heritage's recommendations. The study may subsequently form a Supplementary Planning Document to the Adopted Wigan UDP and will be a material consideration when considering applications for development within the conservation area.

