



Ashton-in-Makerfield

Conservation Area Management Plan

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1. Introduction

1.1 The primary purpose of this Management Plan is to set out how the Ashton-in-Makerfield Conservation Area may be preserved and enhanced. It should be read alongside the Ashton-in-Makerfield Conservation Area Appraisal which describes the historic development of the conservation area and assesses its current condition in relation to character, open spaces, key views and architecture and townscape and concludes by identifying issues and opportunities for enhancement.

1.3 This Management Plan aims to:

- Encourage high quality developments that are sympathetic to enhance the conservation area by raising awareness of the need for owners to maintain their properties to avoid deterioration of properties and harm to the conservation area.
- Inform Council strategies and activities to ensure that where possible they prioritise the preservation and enhancement of the conservation area.
- Promote awareness of the opportunities to enhance the conservation area and harness the positive benefits of proactive conservation management.
- Provide a quick reference guide for applicants and planning officers to the main considerations affecting development in the conservation area.

1.4 To achieve these aims the Management Plan is divided into three sections. The first lays out the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the conservation area, displayed as a simple table. The second section lays out five management issues derived from those identified in the appraisal and sets out actions to deal with those issues. The third section is a 'Guidance for Development and Planning Decisions within the Conservation Area' table, which connects general conservation area considerations with specific sites, types and details relevant to Ashton-in-Makerfield Conservation Area.

1.5 These three sections when read together with the appraisal should allow for the better management of Ashton-in-Makerfield Conservation Area and result in better protection of them so they can continue to be enjoyed by current and future residents of the borough.

2. Ashton-in-Makerfield Conservation Area SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively small conservation area with original surviving street layouts. • Attractive architecture including vernacular and Edwardian style • Exceptionally high quality public house buildings • Common use of traditional materials in the conservation area • Good surviving historic fabric • Good quality modern infill buildings • High quality listed buildings of good quality and setting • Few vacant sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of character arising from inappropriate alterations, notably the replacement of original shopfronts. • Loss of character arising from erosion of details such as removal of chimneys and original windows. • Unsympathetic shop-to-residential conversions. • Street clutter in the form of inappropriate advertisements, signage, and street furniture detract from local character.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To capitalise upon future opportunities presented by funding streams such as Levelling Up Fund. • To be proactive in enforcement of breaches of planning consent. • Restoration of shopfronts and detail on houses (e.g. mock timbering) could be relatively cheap and quick wins. • Works to existing buildings should, where possible, restore historic features. • To promote understanding and appreciation of historic environment through implementing the borough's Historic Environment Strategy in partnership with stakeholders and community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing loss of character through the erosion of historic fabric and architectural details. • Not addressing breaches of planning control within the statutory timeframes could lead to further erosion of the special characteristics of the area. • Potential to lose historic features through conversions under permitted development rights (i.e. commercial to residential) • Potential vacant sites near conservation area may need enhanced consideration.

3. Management Issues and Actions

Incremental change having a negative cumulative impact upon the Conservation Area

Action a: Monitor change in the Conservation Area to assess impact of new development and evaluate the effectiveness of policies and management plan.

Monitoring change in the Conservation Area is important to identify what new development has been carried out, the quality of development and its impact upon the character of the Conservation Area. This will be achieved through the cyclical review of the Conservation Area Appraisal which monitors the quality of new development based upon a representative sample of sites and development types.

Action b: Rolling programme of Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan review across the borough

All the borough's Conservation Areas will be re-appraised on a rolling programme to ensure they remain as up-to-date and relevant as possible.

Lack of awareness of the value of the conservation area leading to erosion of special Characteristics

Action c: Promote awareness and understanding of the conservation area through a range of targeted communication and guidance.

Raising awareness of the value and special characteristics of the conservation area will help promote its stewardship by the community. The council will use a range of guidance and communications to raise awareness of the conservation area, its special features and how they should be actively conserved. In addition to planning policy (referred to above), key tools will be:

- Wigan Borough Historic Environment Strategy (monitored annually)
- Conservation Area leaflets
- Conservation Areas Appraisal and the Management Plan (refreshed on a rolling 10 year programme)

The leaflets available online and the council will work with stakeholders such as local community groups, local Councillors and others to promote awareness of the Ashton-in-Makerfield Conservation Area.

Development has taken place without necessary consent resulting in poor quality development that harms the conservation area

Action d: Pre-empt the need for enforcement activity through promoting awareness of Conservation

Area powers and requirements via Conservation Area Leaflet.

Ashton-in-Makerfield Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan

Raising awareness of the statutory controls on development is important to reduce the potential for unintentional breaches. Improving the quality and accessibility of information available to owners

and occupiers is a key step in pre-empting planning breaches and resource intense enforcement activity that may follow. A Conservation Area leaflet will be published for Ashton-in-Makerfield Conservation Area following the adoption of the Appraisal and Management Plan.

Action e: Pursue enforcement action to rectify breaches of planning control

Where development has taken place without the necessary planning or listed building consent, the Council has powers to pursue enforcement action within a statutorily defined timeframe. Wherever possible breaches will be rectified through negotiation rather than resorting to exercising legal powers. The council will consider the most appropriate course of action taking into account the scope and limitations of the various statutory powers, timescales, and risk to the council (including financial risk of exercising the power). A summary of enforcement powers is provided in the appendix.

4. Guidance for Development and Planning Decisions within the Conservation Area

Theme	Considerations	Specific to Ashton-in-Makerfield Conservation Area
New development within the conservation area	Must preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area.	<p>Opportunities for new buildings are limited in the Ashton-in-Makerfield Conservation Area. The only 'gap' site is land adjacent to the Hingemakers Arms and the site of the former St Oswalds community hall.</p> <p>However, should a development opportunity arise near the Hingemakers Arms, proposals should be around 2-2.5 stories in height respecting the character of the area.</p> <p>At the former community hall site any development should take into account the context of the historic space and greenery and be of a low level and unintrusive.</p> <p>Where minor forms of development are proposed (i.e. alterations to existing premises), they should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For commercial uses - reflect the strong traditional commercial character of Gerard Street. • For residential uses – retain the residential character of dwelling-houses on Heath Road.
	Respect existing architectural character	Buildings throughout the area follow traditional forms and are noted for their decorative elements. On Gerard Street the buildings are to the back of the footpath and on Heath Road there are generally small front gardens.
	Maintain historic street pattern.	New development should maintain the urban grain of the area.

	Should not dominate historic buildings through inappropriate scale and massing.	New developments should fit into a terraced pattern and not exceed 3 stories on Gerard Street apart from corners which may take up to 4 stories.
	Enhance key views	New development should not obscure or detract from the linear views through, and into, the Conservation Area.
	Should reflect existing materials.	Palette of materials to include brick, terracotta, mock-timbering and natural slate. Some rendering may also be permissible as long as it does not obscure brick details and is of traditional form.
New development that affects the setting of the Conservation Area	Massing and size should be a key consideration and must not overbear the conservation area.	Large areas just outside the Conservation Area could potentially be developed, such as the Market Place and the former gasworks. These should not overbear on the conservation area.
	Buildings should be of an appropriate scale.	Should match existing building heights and not exceed 4 stories on corner plots.
Shopfronts	Should retain original timber and stone shopfronts.	Many of the shopfronts along Gerard Street and Warrington Road have historic elements and traditional timberwork. Where possible these should be retained. Where opportunities arise, new/replacement shopfront should adopt a more traditional style to suit the character of the conservation area.
	Shopfronts should respect the proportions and style of the host building.	There are examples where shopfronts bear no relationship to the architecture of the building. Unsympathetic shopfronts are typified by the use of glossy plastic, overlarge facias, projecting box signs and external roller-shutters. These should be removed and traditional materials used instead.
	Should comply with the Council's Shopfront Design Guide.	The Shopfront Design Guide is an adopted supplementary planning document and carries weight in planning decisions.
Windows	Presumption to retain original windows.	Particular emphasis upon retaining original first-floor windows above shops to maintain character.
	Replicate type, division and proportion of individual panes and thickness of mullions, transoms, frames.	Ornate 1 st floor windows, especial bays and oriels are particularly characterful of this area.
	Materials should be traditional where possible, i.e. timber not uPVC and compatible with surrounding fabric.	Many properties already have replacements, must maintain the few remaining original windows including sash-windows and leaded lights.
	Where alterations are proposed they should be on the less	Significacne should be identified through an appropriate Heritage Statement.

	'significant' areas of the building.	Where unsympathetic replacements have been made then opportunity to reinstate/improve appearance must be taken.
Demolition	Presumption against demolition of historic buildings.	Emphasis should be upon refurbishment and reuse of vacant/underused historic buildings.
Walls, boundaries chimneys	Should be retained if historic as part of the character of conservation area. Replacement should be on a like-for-like materials basis.	Chimneys are prominent on a number of buildings in the area and their removal should be resisted. Boundary walls are a feature of this conservation area, especially on residential properties and around the churchyard. Removal of walls should also be resisted. Where they have been removed replacement should be encouraged.
Trees	Opportunities for planting or replanting or new plantings should use native species.	There is a substantial amount of greenery in the Conservation Area around the historic churches, including large areas of tree planting. If trees are to be removed they should be replaced with native species. Gerard Street has a number of small street-trees near where the road curves. These should be maintained and enhanced where possible.
Streetscape and public realm	Street light columns and other street furniture should be of consistent design and painted in a dark colour where possible.	Liaise with Council departments to ensure design features of the conservation area are taken into account in future schemes.
	Double yellow lines where strictly necessary should be repainted using narrow lines and of a primrose or deep cream colour.	Gerard Street is heavily trafficked and relatively narrow for the size of vehicles that regularly use it. Double yellow lines are important to avoid constriction of the carriage way through vehicle parking. Side streets are also quite narrow and therefore double yellow lines are also necessary here.
	Road signs should be of the minimum size and number allowable to prevent clutter, and be kept in a good condition.	Encourage and support the Highways Department to review signage strategy in the conservation area.
	Any new highways features such as speed control measures,	Liaise with Council departments to ensure design features of the conservation area are taken into account in future schemes.

	railings, widening of footpaths, new signs and lines are justified and of an appropriate, sympathetic design which takes account of the sensitive nature of the area	
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5. Appendix A

Article 4 Directions: - An article 4 direction is a direction under article 4 of the General Permitted Development Order which enables the Secretary of State or the local planning authority to withdraw specified permitted development rights across a defined area. This can remove the right of homeowners to change things such as windows/doors etc... that would not normally need planning permission.

Enforcement Powers: - The Council, as a Local Planning Authority has a number of statutory powers that it can use to ensure the historic environment, including Conservation Areas are protected. Although the Council does have these powers we will always, in the first instance, attempt to work with the owner of the property to come to a solution on an informal basis without resorting to these statutory powers.

A summary of the powers is below:

Section 215 Notices

If it appears to the local planning authority that the amenity of part of their area, or of an adjoining area, is adversely affected by the condition of land in their area, they may serve on the owner and occupier of the land a Notice under section 215, Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

This notice will explain what the issues are and the steps that need to be taken to resolve the issues. It will also set out a timeframe of no less than 28 days for the steps to be taken

In this context 'land' also covers buildings on that land and 'amenity' means everything from how the building looks to community and safety issues that the land is causing or contributing to. The scope of works that can be required in section 215 Notices is wide and includes planting, clearance, tidying, enclosure, demolition, rebuilding, external repairs and repainting.

If the owner does not carry out the works themselves, the local authority can and recover costs from the owner. Non compliance with a Section 215 notice is a criminal offence and can result in a fine.

Urgent Works Notices

The power to execute urgent works to preserve unoccupied listed buildings may be exercised by any local authority under section 54(1) of the Listed Buildings Act 1990.

An urgent works notice may be served where works are urgently necessary for the preservation of a listed building and should generally be restricted to urgent repairs to keep a building wind and weather-proof and safe from collapse, or action to prevent vandalism or theft. The steps taken should be consistent with achieving this objective.

The owner will be given a minimum of seven days written notice of the local authority's intention to carry out the works and the notice must describe the proposed works.

If the owner does not carry out the works themselves, the local authority can and recover costs from the owner. Such cost may include the continuing expense of providing temporary support or shelter of the building.

Repair Notices

Section 47 of the Listed Buildings Act 1990 provides that an appropriate authority or the Secretary of State may compulsorily acquire a listed building in need of repair if it appears that reasonable steps are not being taken for its proper preservation. This is most often the case where there has been protracted failure of the owner to address the building at risk.

Under section 47, there is a two-stage process: (i) service of a Repairs Notice; and (ii) service of a Notice of compulsory acquisition on every owner, lessee and occupier if, after the expiry of two months it appears to the appropriate authority that reasonable steps are not being taken for properly preserving the building.

The scope of a repairs notice is broad and depends entirely on the context and situation of each building and site. The repairs notice is often seen as the first step of a Compulsory Purchase route.

Compulsory Purchase Orders

This is the ultimate power of the Local Authority and will allow for the acquisition of a site if previous efforts to encourage the owner to act to preserve its historic importance have failed.

Owners will usually be compensated at open market value. However, there are some differences in the case of a listed building in disrepair.

The local authority may include within the Compulsory Purchase Order application a direction for minimum compensation if it considers that the owner has deliberately allowed the building to fall into disrepair in order to justify its demolition and secure permission for redevelopment of the site.