

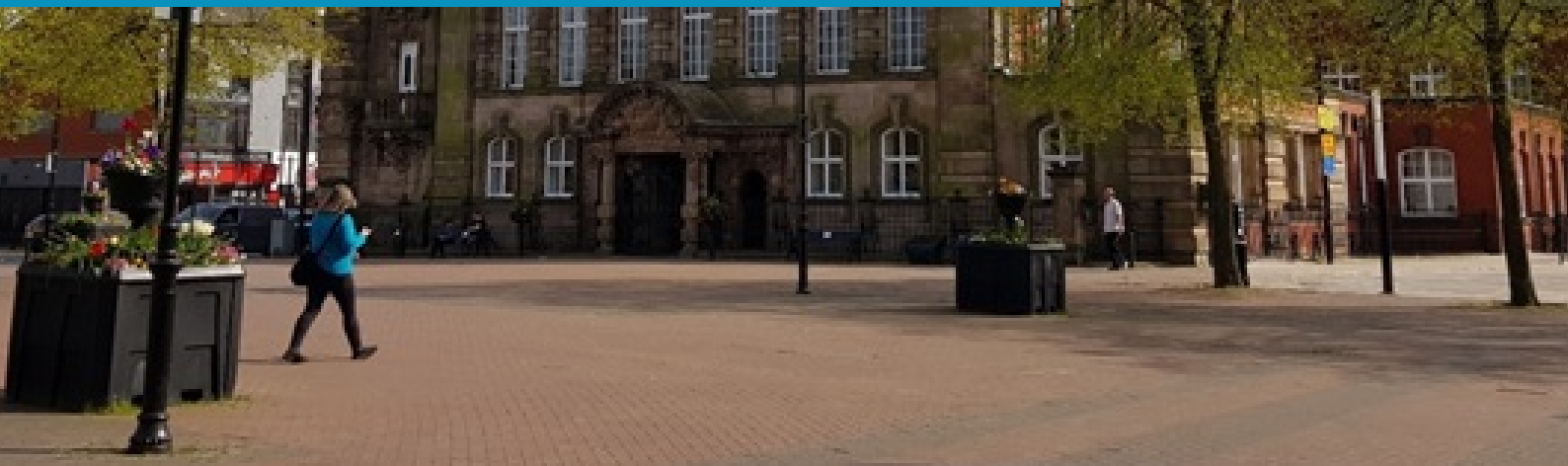


Wigan 
Council



Leigh Town Centre Conservation Area Management Plan

January 2022



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1 Introduction

- 1.1** The primary purpose of this Management Plan is to set out how the Leigh Town Centre Conservation Area may be preserved and enhanced. It should be read alongside the Leigh Town Centre 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.
- 1.2** This Management Plan aims to:
- Encourage high quality developments that are sympathetic to enhance the conservation area.
 - Raise awareness of the need for owners to maintain their properties to avoid deterioration 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 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.
- 1.3** 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 Leigh Town Centre Conservation Area.
- 1.4** These three sections when read together with the appraisal should allow for the better management of Leigh Town Centre 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 Leigh Town Centre Conservation Area SWOT Analysis

2.1 The following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats summarise the analysis of the Leigh Town Centre Conservation Area in the Conservation Area Appraisal and provide the basis for the actions proposed in this Management Plan.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong retention of original street layout and historic building fabric which creates a strong town centre environment. • Attractive architecture, mainly from the late Victorian and Edwardian period. • Clear local identity expressed through built form, architectural styles and materials. • Well established and varied uses including commercial and residential • Generally well maintained private buildings • Successful restoration of Town Hall (Grade II listed) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of character arising from inappropriate alterations, notably replacement of original window with upvc alternatives, rendering of facades, unsympathetic shopfronts, signage and security measures. • Loss of character arising from demolition which has fragmented previously continuous frontages and resulted in gap sites often used as surface carparks. • Severance of the town centre by busy roads fragments sense of place and character, for example between Bradshawgate and Civic Square. • Street clutter in the form of inappropriate advertisements, signage, and street furniture detracting from local character.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To capitalise upon opportunities presented by the emerging Leigh Town Centre Strategic Regeneration Framework to address gap sites, enhance connectivity and raise overall quality of development. • Capitalise upon successful Town Hall refurbishment to revitalise the Civic Square and adjoining public spaces. • Encourage appropriate new uses for vacant land and underused buildings. • Reduce street clutter. • To promote understanding and appreciation of historic environment through implementing Historic Environment Strategy in partnership with stakeholders and community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development pressure for unsympathetic alterations or new buildings. • Loss of character through erosion of historic fabric/architectural details. • Decline through increased vacancy and changing retail market. • Alteration of historic settings by the inappropriate redevelopment of sites in the surrounding area. • Owners not being aware of and Council not being proactive on material breaches of planning control.

3 Management Issues and Actions

1. **Need to encourage high quality development that is sympathetic to the conservation area and resist poor quality development**

Action a: To provide more specific and detailed guidance on application of policy and guidance in this conservation area

- 3.1 Planning decisions have to be made in accordance with the councils adopted development plan unless there is a very good reason not to do so. The Wigan Borough development plan comprises the Local Plan Core Strategy and saved policies in the Unitary Development Plan. The most relevant policies to conservation are Core Policy 11 (CP11) and the saved UDP Policy EV4a.
- 3.2 Supplementary planning documents elaborate upon adopted policies and are also taken into account in decision making. Those particularly relevant in the Leigh Town Centre Conservation Area are the Shopfront Design Guide, Canalside Development and Improvement Guide, Landscape Design Supplementary Planning Document, Residential Design Guide and House Extension Design Guide.
- 3.3 The guidance in the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, including the section 'Guidance for Development and Planning Decisions within the Conservation Area' supplements other policy documents and offers targeted guidance and specific to the historic environment and to Leigh Town Centre.

2. **Permitted development rights leading to development and alterations that harm the character of the conservation area.**

Action b: Consider the merits of an Article 4 Direction for The Avenue and War Memorial areas of Leigh Town Centre Conservation Area which are predominantly residential.

- 3.4 The use of Article 4 Directions enables local planning authorities to control minor alterations to unlisted residential property, which could otherwise be carried out by property owners without planning permission under 'permitted development' rights. Alterations such as the installation of replacement doors and windows, re-roofing in modern materials, the removal of chimneys, the addition of porches, or the removal of front boundaries and the creation of car parking in front gardens, can all be controlled by an Article 4 Direction. Commercial properties have more limited permitted development rights and therefore Article 4 Directions are less applicable to commercial areas. It is considered that an Article 4 direction would have most effect on The Avenue and War Memorial Areas which are more typically residential in character.

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

Action c: Pre-empt the need for enforcement activity through promoting awareness of Conservation Area powers and requirements via Town Centre Leaflet.

- 3.5 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.

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

3.6 Where development has taken place without the necessary planning or listed building consent, the Council has powers to pursue enforcement action. 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. Lack of awareness of the value of the conservation area leading to erosion of special characteristics

Action e: To promote awareness and understanding of the conservation area through a range of targeted communication and guidance.

3.7 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
- Conservation Area leaflets
- Conservation Areas Appraisal and the Management Plan

5. Incremental change having a negative cumulative impact upon the Conservation Area

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

3.8 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 may be achieved through the Annual Monitoring Report and may focus upon major development and sensitive sites (e.g. buildings of townscape merit and key views).

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

3.9 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.

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

Theme	General considerations	Specific to Leigh Town Centre Conservation Area
New development within the conservation area or that affects its setting	Preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area.	Reflect key buildings and dominant styles.
	Respect existing architectural character.	Varied styles but typical forms with narrow bays, prominent gables and prominent corner buildings.
	Maintain historic street pattern.	Maintain tight urban grid iron layout.
	Protect or enhance key views	Enhance the key views identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal.
	Should not dominate historic buildings through inappropriate scale and massing.	Development should pay particular regard to listed buildings , corner buildings, buildings of townscape merit.
	Should reflect existing materials and replacement should be on a like-for-like materials basis.	Dominant materials in the Leigh Town Centre Conservation Area are brick, terracotta, faience, stone, natural slate. Residential properties have strong front boundaries built of brick or local stone with hedge-planting above.
	Utilise under used sites and buildings to reduce vacancy, enhance activity and limit likelihood of deterioration of historic fabric and townscape value.	Current undeveloped sites such as surface car parks that may be developed maintaining urban density. Encourage re-use of upper floors above commercial properties, especially on Bradshawgate.
	Development of sites adjacent or in proximity to the conservation area must be carefully considered as these can impact its setting and views in and out.	Land to the south of Bradshawgate and east of King Street are potential sites where impact on the conservation area must be considered sensitively.
Demolition	Presumption against demolition of historic buildings.	Demolition usually requires consent in a Conservation Area it is important to note however that demolition of historic buildings will be resisted in favour of proposals that refurbish and reuse of vacant/underused historic buildings (such as the former Cooperative Building).

	Demolition of buildings may be supported if they do not positively contribute to the historic character and appearance of the conservation area and provided that replacement development will enhance the conservation area.	Demolition usually requires consent in a Conservation Area it is important to note however that several buildings do not make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area – their demolition and replacement with more sympathetic, higher quality development will be supported in principle. Examples include Turnpike House, former Carpet shop and King Street Methodist Church.
Windows	Presumption to retain original windows.	Whilst every effort should be made to retain all original windows Particular emphasis should be placed upon retaining original upper windows above shops, especially on Bradshawgate.
	Where unsympathetic replacements have been made then opportunity to reinstate/improve appearance must be taken.	Replicate type, division and proportion of individual panes and thickness of mullions, transoms and frames.
	Materials should be traditional where possible, i.e. timber not uPVC and compatible with surrounding fabric.	Many original windows sit within stone frames or mullions. Traditional methods of construction should be used (i.e. no expanding foam).
	Where alterations are proposed they should be on the less 'significant' areas of the building.	Because of the density of Leigh town centre there are many elevations that are not visible (in whole or part) - changes on such elevations are unlikely to affect the character and appearance of the conservation area.
Walls, boundaries chimneys	Should be retained if historic as part of the character of conservation area.	There are front walls within The Avenue and War Memorial character areas which are important features of the conservation area.
Streetscape and public realm	Street lighting columns and other street furniture should be of consistent design and painted in a dark colour where possible.	Many lighting columns and signposts are not painted sympathetically or are in unattractive bare metal. Discreet public realm schemes have often used bespoke street furniture which can be difficult to replace and results in mis-matching across the entire conservation area.
	Double yellow lines should be repainted using narrow lines and of a primrose or deep cream colour.	Parts of Leigh Town Centre have very narrow carriageways and standard sized and standard coloured lines and markings can visually overwhelm the street scene.

	Road signs should be of the minimum size and number allowable to prevent clutter and be kept in a good condition.	The War Memorial character area, where narrow streets are prominent, is particularly cluttered with signage and there is opportunity to rationalise it to essential features only.
	Any new highway features such as speed control measures, 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.	Market Place/Market Street/King Street are busy roads and key parts of the conservation area. Proposals to enhance the pedestrian and cycle environment have the opportunity to also enhance the conservation area. Early engagement will help ensure materials and street furniture is appropriate and maintains historic character.
	Public realm improvements such as paving, sets and general public realm should be of high quality and designed to be sympathetic to the historic character of the area.	The Civic Square was last remodelled in the 1970s and has dated poorly with modern tegula paving, street furniture and planting which detract from the impressive surrounding buildings. Any new improvements should utilise more traditional materials such as stone.
Shopfronts	Should retain original timber shopfronts.	Many of the shopfronts along Bradshawgate are unsympathetic to the historic character of the building and wider conservation area.
	Shopfronts should respect the proportions and style of the host building.	There are examples throughout the town centre where modern shopfronts bear no relationship to the architecture of the building. Shopfronts should balance occupier requirements with the need to respect the form of the main building. This is usually caused by over-deep facias, projecting box signs and external roller-shutters which are especially prevalent on Bradshawgate.
	Replacements should respect traditional design (i.e. cornice, transoms, pilasters, stallrisers, recessed doorways) and use traditional materials (such as timber and lead)	Traditional materials including highly decorated wooden shopfronts were a feature of Leigh and can still be identified in historic photographs.
	Should comply with Wigan Shopfront Design Guide	The new shopfronts at the Town Hall should be used as good examples.
Trees	Trees that contribute to the character of the conservation area should be retained. Where removal is justified (e.g. due to disease or health and safety) trees should be replaced by specimens of appropriate species and size.	There is very limited amount of greenery in Leigh town centre. Additional tree planting can have wider environmental benefits and would be supported where there is no negative impact upon the character of the conservation area.

	<p>Selective removal of trees where appropriate to enhance the character of the conservation areas may be supported.</p>	<p>This is particularly relevant in the Civic Square where the current trees appear root-bound and are not large enough to adequately frame the buildings around the square. Their current height is not sufficient to produce decent shade nor enhance the area. Selective removal and new planting will enhance the conservation area.</p>
	<p>Opportunities for planting or replanting or new plantings should use native species suited to the location.</p>	<p>Opportunities for enhanced planting may arise at potential development sites and as part of enhancements to public realm</p>

5 Appendix A

5.1 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.

5.2 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.

5.3 A summary of the powers is below:

Section 215 Notices

5.4 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.

5.5 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

5.6 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.

5.7 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

5.8 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.

5.9 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.

5.10 The owner will 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.

5.11 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

5.12 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.

- 5.13** 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.
- 5.14** 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

- 5.15** 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.
- 5.16** Owners will usually be compensated at open market value. However, there are some differences in the case of a listed building in disrepair.
- 5.17** 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.

