



Leigh Railway Road 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 Railway Road Conservation Area may be preserved and enhanced. It should be read alongside the Railway Road 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 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 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 Railway Road Conservation Area.
- 1.4** These three sections when read together with the appraisal should allow for the better management of Railway Road 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 Railway Road Conservation Area SWOT Analysis

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

Conservation Area SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong retention of original street layout and historic buildings which creates a strong commercial environment. • Compact Conservation Area with some good surviving fabric including shopfronts. • Attractive architecture, mainly from the late Victorian period. • Strong homogeneity of materials and forms. • Well established continuation of commercial and residential uses. • Superb and high-quality buildings - J.C. Prestwich building former College in particular. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of character arising from inappropriate alterations, notably replacement of original shopfronts. • Loss of character arising from erosion of details such as chimneys and windows. • Some untidy shop fronts and unsympathetic shop-residential conversions. • Prominent former College building is in poor repair and there is uncertainty regarding its long-term use and viability. • Several commercial premises (notably hot food take-aways) are closed during the day which limits the vibrancy of the street. • 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 Leigh Strategic Regeneration Framework to address vacancy, enhance connectivity and raise overall quality of development. • Retain the strong linear character of Railway Road through to Atherleigh Way. • To restore and reuse the former Leigh College building to be a positive landmark feature within the street. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing pressure from unsympathetic alterations due commercial to residential conversions (including to Homes in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)). • Not addressing breaches of planning control within the statutory timeframes could lead to the erosion of the special characteristics of the area. • Uncertainties over the future of the former College building – the significance of this threat is high due to the profile of the building and its value to the conservation area overall.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To promote understanding and appreciation of historic environment through implementing Historic Environment Strategy in partnership with stakeholders and community.• To conserve original features found in adjacent terraces not currently within the conservation area by extending the boundary. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Decline through increasing vacancy and changes in the retail market.• Continuing loss of character through the erosion of historic fabric and architectural details.. |
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3 Management Issues and Actions

1. **Issue: Need to encourage high quality development that is sympathetic to the conservation area and steer away from poor quality development**

Action a: To have an appropriate level of conservation and design policy and guidance in place to inform planning and development decisions.

Planning decisions have to be made in accordance with the council's published '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 from the Unitary Development Plan (UDP), the most relevant policies to conservation being Core Strategy policy CP11 and saved UDP Policy EV4a.

Supplementary planning documents elaborate upon adopted policies and are also taken into account in decision making, those particularly relevant in the Railway Road Conservation Area are the Shopfront Design Guide, Residential Design Guide and House Extension Design Guide.

The guidance in this Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, in particular the section 'Guidance for Development and Planning Decisions within the Conservation Area' supplements other policy documents. It offers targeted guidance specific to the historic environment and to Leigh Railway Road, the application of which will benefit the conservation of area.

2. **Issue: 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 considered for the residential terraces of the Railway Road Conservation Area.

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. All of these issues are pertinent to the residential properties within the Leigh Railway Road Conservation Area.

Commercial properties have more limited permitted development rights and therefore Article 4 Directions are less applicable to commercial areas.

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 Conservation Area Leaflet.

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 Leigh Railway Road Conservation Area following the adoption of the Appraisal and Management Plan.

Action d: 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. **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.

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.

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 and also via the borough's Annual Monitoring Report which monitors the quality of new development based upon a representative sample of sites and development types.

Action g: 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.

4 Guidance for Development and Planning Decisions within the Conservation Area

Theme	Considerations	Specific to Railway Road 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 Railway Road Conservation Area. The only 'gap' site is the car park/ community garden. However, should a development opportunity arise, proposals should be around 2-3 stories in height and no taller than the former College building.</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 Railway Road shops. • For residential uses – retain the residential character of dwelling-houses on Railway Road.
	Respect existing architectural character.	Preference to development that includes decoration, detail and texture. Buildings generally to be built up to the back of footpath
	Maintain historic street pattern.	New development should maintain the tight urban grain of the area.
	Should not dominate historic buildings through inappropriate scale and massing.	New development should be terraced or if only partially fitting into existing ones.
	Enhance key views	New development should not obscure or detract from the linear views through the Conservation Area.
	Should reflect existing materials.	Palette of materials to include brick, terracotta, faience, stone and natural slate.
New development that affects the setting of the conservation area	Massing should be a key consideration – especially the impact on regular terraces.	Important to have tight urban grain in regular blocks and not disrupt street pattern.
	Buildings must be of an appropriate scale.	Any new development on the land behind the former College building must respect the height of the building itself and the tight terraces that surround it.
	Views in and out and impact on neighbouring conservation area.	Land at the rear of Bengal Street must respond to the Civic Square in the Leigh Town Centre Conservation Area but must also have respect to Railway Road through appropriate size and activity

Shopfronts	Should retain original timber shopfronts.	Many of the shopfronts along Railway Road are unsympathetic to the historic character of the conservation area. Where opportunities arise new/replacement shopfront should adopt a more traditional style.
	Shopfronts should respect the proportions and style of the host building.	There are examples throughout Railway Road 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 building. Unsympathetic shopfronts are typified by the use of glossy plastic, overlarge facias, projecting box signs and external roller-shutters.
	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. Where opportunities arise new/replacement shopfronts should respect traditional design.
	Should comply with Wigan Shopfront Design Guide.	The Shopfront Design Guide is an adopted planning document and therefore 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, especially bays and oriels are a particular characteristic of this area that should be reflected in development proposals.
	Materials should be traditional where possible, i.e. timber not uPVC and compatible with surrounding fabric.	Many properties already have replacement windows, despite this precedent, development proposals should seek to retain the few original windows (including sash-windows and leaded lights).
	Where alterations are proposed they should be on the less 'significant' areas of the building.	Where unsympathetic replacements have been made then the opportunity to reinstate/improve appearance should be taken. The main facades of buildings (including elevations visible from the street and public areas) are of most concern and particular attention should be paid to the design and conservation of these façades.
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.	Large chimneys are prominent on a number of terraces and their removal should be resisted. Where previously removed, replacement of chimneys should be encouraged.

		Boundary walls to residential properties are a feature of this conservation area, although some have been removed. Removal should be resisted and where removed replacement encouraged.
Trees and landscaping	Opportunities for planting or replanting or new plantings should use native species.	<p>There is very limited amount of greenery in Railway Road. The area is densely developed and there is little scope for planting. Therefore, any opportunities for enhanced planting that arise at potential development sites or as part of enhancements to public realm should adhere to the 'right tree in the right place' principle and would be considered favourably.</p> <p>There may be potential to enhance landscaping around the perimeter of the Railway Road car park and as part of the small community garden. There may also be opportunities in areas adjacent to the conservation area, which could enhance the setting of the conservation area, such as around Bengal Street car park and the rear of the former College building.</p>
Streetscape and public realm	Street light columns and other street furniture should be of consistent design and painted in a dark colour where possible.	To ensure design features of the conservation area are taken into account in future schemes and that street furniture is of a consistent style and quality.
	Double yellow lines where strictly necessary should be repainted using narrow lines and of a primrose or deep cream colour.	Railway Road has a high-level of on-street parking and as such road markings are important. However 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.	Encourage and support a signage strategy review in the conservation area.
	Any new highways 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	To ensure that the design of highway schemes is sympathetic to the character of the conservation area and takes account of the sensitive nature of the area.

5 Appendix A

5.1 Appendix A

5.2 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.

5.3 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:

5.4 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.

5.5 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 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.

5.6 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.

5.7 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.

