

CONTROLLING NEW DEVELOPMENT IN CONSERVATION AREAS

New buildings within conservation areas should be sympathetic in their design and use materials which fit in with the special character of the area in which they are located.

When dealing with planning applications which affect sites in conservation areas the District Council requires applicants to submit sufficiently detailed plans to enable the Authority to assess the effect the proposals will have on the established character of the conservation area. Normally, applications in outline form will not be accepted. Detailed applications including plans, elevations and sections will be required which show the development within its setting.

ALTERATIONS AND EXTENSIONS TO EXISTING BUILDINGS IN CONSERVATION AREAS

The character of the District's conservation areas is derived very much from the continuing survival of a wide range of traditional building styles, details and materials. This rich architectural heritage can be spoiled by the cumulative impact of minor alterations or extensions to buildings and changes to other structures which make up the local scene.

Many properties in conservation areas are unlisted and with some residential properties there are a range of changes that can be carried out without the need for Planning Permission or consent under the Building Regulations. It is always better however, to check with the Local Authority that no consents are required before any work is undertaken.

Even in situations where consent is not required, the District Council can still provide advice and has produced written guidance* to assist owners of historic buildings who are proposing to repair, alter or extend their property.

(* *Supplementary Planning Guidance No 13 Historic Buildings: Repairs, Alterations and Extensions*, available online at www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/yourdistrict/planning/localplan/spg)

MEASURES AIMED AT POSITIVELY ENHANCING CONSERVATION AREAS

The Council will seek to promote and support measures which are aimed at enhancing the District's conservation areas as far as practically possible. Such positive measures could include: finding new uses for redundant properties or land, encouraging the replacement or restoration of neglected buildings, and ensuring that other important structures such as walls, railings, bridges etc, are properly maintained and repaired. Enhancing important public spaces will also be encouraged, as will improvements in the appearance of roads, footpaths and other surfaces in more sensitive areas. Soft landscaping works, including tree and hedge planting, will be encouraged where it is considered that they will enhance the character or appearance of the area.

Where a site is used in such a way that it detracts from the attractive nature of a conservation area then the District Council will seek to negotiate improvements or where possible, will encourage a more sympathetic use of the land.

Proposals for reducing traffic congestion in and around conservation areas by traffic management schemes will also be considered.

In order to improve the appearance of conservation areas electricity and telephone companies will be encouraged where possible to put unsightly wires and cables underground.

FURTHER ADVICE

If you have other, more detailed questions, contact the Design and Conservation Team, Planning Services, Suffolk Coastal District Council
Melton Hill, WOODBRIDGE, Suffolk, IP12 1AU
Tel: (01394) 383789
email: conservation@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk
www.suffolkcoastal.co.uk



CONSERVATION AREAS

A Guide



Planning Services



THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF CONSERVATION AREA DESIGNATION

It is now well recognised that the mere preservation of the existing qualities of an attractive area of historic importance is not enough. A complete ban on any form of change or new development will invariably mean stagnation and decay.

Conservation area legislation therefore has two roles. On the one hand it is aimed at ensuring that the important characteristics and attractive appearance of the area are preserved. At the same time it is also aimed at encouraging improvements to be made so that the area remains alive and prosperous.

CONSERVATION AREA LEGISLATION

Conservation Areas are defined in the Town and Country Planning Acts as “.... areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.”

The Act requires the Local Planning Authority to designate Conservation Areas where it is considered appropriate within the area that they cover.

The main effect of conservation area designation is that the Local Planning Authority can control more closely the design of new buildings, alterations and extensions to existing ones. This is to ensure that they do not conflict with the established character and appearance of the area.

Local Planning Authorities also have a duty, from time to time, to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas. Proposals for improvements should be subject to public consultation before schemes are implemented.

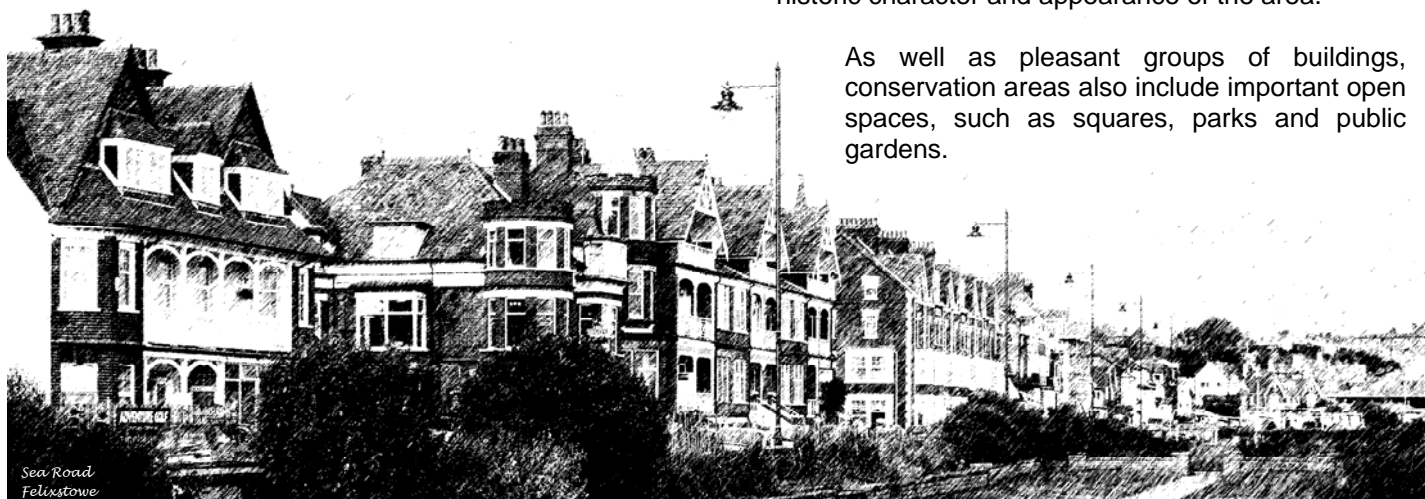
Local Authorities are empowered to contribute financially to works to buildings, structures and spaces within conservation areas in order to preserve and enhance their special character and appearance.

Once a conservation area is designated development proposals which require Planning Permission, and would have an effect upon the character of the area, must be advertised on the site and in a local newspaper. This gives anybody who is interested the opportunity to submit their views to the District Council which is then obliged to take them into account when determining the application.

Demolition within designated areas requires consent (Conservation Area Consent). There are a few small exceptions to this regulation in that such things as temporary buildings, low walls and small sheds can be demolished without permission.

Where an unlisted building which is particularly important in a conservation area has been allowed to decay, in exceptional circumstances only, the Local Authority has powers to ensure that repairs necessary to make the building weatherproof are carried out.

Trees are given special legal protection within conservation areas. With certain exceptions for commercial forestry and fruit trees, the Council must be given 6 weeks' notification in writing before any felling or pruning of a tree above a certain minimum size can take place. This gives the Council the opportunity to consider making a Preservation Order to protect the tree.



CONSERVATION AREAS IN SUFFOLK COASTAL

The Suffolk Coastal area has a rich and unique heritage of historic towns and villages. It would be very easy, however, for the traditional character and appearance of these towns and villages to be spoilt by inappropriate change and new development. The District Council, therefore, considers it very important that this rich heritage is afforded adequate protection.

The ability to designate conservation areas is regarded by the Council as being particularly helpful in ensuring that the important local building tradition and identity of the District is properly preserved.

Currently the Council has designated 34 conservation areas within the District. These include many of different types and sizes, from the largest one which covers the whole of the central part of a town to some which only cover a small part of a village.

Most of the conservation areas are centred upon Listed buildings but just as importantly they include buildings which, although not listed in their own right, do positively contribute to the architectural and historic character and appearance of the area.

As well as pleasant groups of buildings, conservation areas also include important open spaces, such as squares, parks and public gardens.