

Conservation Areas Management Plan

Supplementary Planning Document



April 2014

Conservation Areas Management Plan

Introduction

This generic Conservation Areas Management Plan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) sets out the package of measures available to the Council to apply to all of its Conservation Areas. It should be read in conjunction with the area-specific Management Plans relating to the individual Conservation Areas.

Purpose

A Conservation Area is an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. Cannock Chase District has eight Conservation Areas within its boundary and the Council is required from time to time to formulate and publish proposals for their preservation and enhancement. The concept of Conservation Areas was introduced under the Civic Amenities Act 1967 and historic areas are now extensively recognised for the contribution they make to our cultural inheritance, economic wellbeing and quality of life.

The eight Conservation Areas are:

Cannock Town Centre

Bridgtown

Rugeley Town Centre

Main Road, Brereton

Trent and Mersey Canal

Church Street, Rugeley

Talbot Street/Lichfield Street, Rugeley

Sheep Fair/Bow Street, Rugeley

The first to be designated in 1973 was Rugeley Town Centre and the most recent in 2004 was Sheep Fair/Bow Street. Further information and maps relating to these Areas are available on the Council's website www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk Figs. 1 to 8 illustrate scenes from these conservation areas.

Conservation Area legislation recognises that historic and architecturally interesting buildings do not exist in isolation but stand within a particular urban or rural context which provides a setting for the buildings and may have a special recognisable character or appearance. The natural landscape of trees and hedges as well as the built landscape of designed and vernacular buildings contribute to this character. The legislative background to Conservation Areas has been piecemeal and although best practice has developed over time, concerns continue to be expressed at how change is resulting in their deterioration. Most recently this issue has been publicised by Historic England in their 'Conservation Areas at Risk' campaign in 2009, when Rugeley Town Centre and Talbot Street/Lichfield Street Conservation Areas were highlighted as 'At Risk'. An integrated approach to the care of Conservation Areas is therefore as important as ever, and if historic areas are to survive and designation of a Conservation Area is to retain any meaning then the commitment of all involved is vital.



Fig. 1 Cannock Town Centre Conservation Area



Fig. 2 Rugeley Town Centre Conservation Area



Fig. 3 Trent and Mersey Canal Conservation Area

Fig. 4 Church Street
Conservation
Area



Fig. 5 Brereton
Conservation
Area

Fig. 6 Talbot Street/
Lichfield Street
Conservation
Area





Fig. 7 Sheepfair / Bow Street Conservation Area

Fig. 8 Bridgtown Conservation Area



Once Conservation Areas are designated, proposals seeking to preserve or enhance their special character or appearance can be proposed and consulted upon. The first step in preparing proposals is to clearly define the special interest of the Area through an Appraisal - a written assessment of its character and appearance – what matters and why. This describes its historic development, analyses its character, touches on negative features and makes recommendations for its enhancement including how change can best be accommodated. Appraisals are subject to consultation and publicity to ensure the involvement of those most affected. A programme of Appraisals for all the above Conservation Areas is nearing completion.

The next step is to set out the means by which preservation and enhancement of that character and appearance may be pursued through preparation of Management Plans. The approach being taken in Cannock Chase District comprises an overall generic Management Plan, setting out the package of generic measures available to the Council to apply to all its Conservation Areas, and a series of concise area-specific Management Plans relating to the individual Conservation Areas, including recommendations for action, which will need to be read together.

The Appraisal and Management Plan documents are intended to result in an understanding of why the Areas are important, what features and qualities should be retained and how change, including new development, could be accommodated whilst reinforcing the special character. Designation of a Conservation Area is not intended to prevent change but to ensure that it takes place in a way sympathetic to the special interest of that particular area. A Conservation Area is subject to incremental change, through replacement windows and roofing materials for example, as well as more dramatic change, such as redevelopment and infill schemes. Some work requires planning permission whilst other work does not. Some areas are in a state of relative economic decline and suffer from lack of investment and decay, in others the qualities that make the Area appealing also help to encourage over-investment and pressure for development. A Management Plan is essential if such pressures and situations are to be handled in an appropriate way.

Policy Background

Government Policy recognises the importance of effective protection for all aspects of the historic environment through legislation and policy guidance. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provides specific protection for buildings and areas of special architectural or historic interest. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012 (Section 12) provides a full statement of Government policy for the historic environment including the recognition of significance of a variety of heritage assets and is supported by the Planning Practice Guidance 2014. Historic England also published guidance on the preparation of Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans in 2005.

Staffordshire County Council supported by Historic England has undertaken an Extensive Urban Survey of both Rugeley and Cannock within a series of 23 medieval Staffordshire towns. Each report aims to characterise the historic development of the town through reference to historic sources, cartographic material and archaeological evidence.

Cannock Chase Local Plan (Part 1) was adopted in 2014 and contains local planning policy including CP15 seeking to safeguard all aspects of the District's historic environment. Policies CP12 and CP14 seek to enhance biodiversity and landscape character. The Plan includes the Rugeley Town Centre Area Action Plan which sets out a development framework for Rugeley town centre including urban design principles and guidance for opportunity sites. The Conservation Area Appraisals already carried out form background documents to the Local Plan, and the Conservation Area Management Plans will be adopted as Supplementary Planning Documents.

This document has been prepared in accordance with this policy background.

Content

This Management Plan aims to set out the generic measures and strategies available to the Council to address the issues highlighted in each Conservation Area Appraisal, to which the area-specific Management Plans will refer. It draws together a range of useful existing controls and tools and suggests how they might be used to achieve positive action to the benefit of the Conservation Areas. It also considers the issue of resources, both human and financial, and the involvement of the local community. Effective Conservation Area Management requires a clear idea and specific policies for the improvement of the area and for tackling problems in a number of co-ordinated ways.

Consultation and publicity

Consultation and publicity on the Draft Management Plan has followed a similar procedure as adopted for the Appraisals. A report was taken to the Council's Cabinet seeking approval of the Draft for consultation. A copy of the Draft was sent to local Ward Councillors and Town/Parish Councils with Conservation Areas in their areas, the Landor Society and technical consultees such as the County Council and Historic England. Occupiers of all properties in Conservation Areas were consulted, newspaper advertisements invited comments more widely and copies were available in local Libraries and on the Council's website. At the end of this process comments received and proposed changes to the Draft in the light of these were reported back to the Council's Cabinet prior to adoption of the Management Plan. Involvement of the local community in development of the Management Plan is essential if the proposals are to succeed and the long term viability of the Conservation Areas as important assets is to be secured. A 'partnership' approach will provide the local community with the opportunity to suggest ideas for the enhancement of 'their' Conservation Area and determine priorities for action.

Delivery and Monitoring

The Management Plan aims to provide a medium to long term strategy and act as a working document to be reviewed on a five year cycle. Delivery of the measures put forward will be by a combination of means including encouragement of high quality design and raising awareness of historic environment issues by the Council, use of developer contributions to finance public realm improvements, and commitment to the preservation and enhancement of appearance and character by developers/development

professionals and the local community. The plan is intended to be visionary, and bear in mind that doing nothing in some circumstances can be a positive decision too. New ways of improving Conservation Areas need to be found and the Management Plan has a role to play in stimulating debate. It aims to provide guidance for all those proposing and considering changes in Conservation Areas, as well as those responsible for keeping Conservation Areas in a well-maintained condition, and be accessible and readable by all.

Resources

Unless or until financial support becomes available as grants for building works or environmental enhancements the main opportunity for enhancement will be through the Development Management process to ensure that future development requiring planning permission takes account of the special interest of the Conservation Area. The plan enables decisions to be taken within the context of an overall strategy for the area, albeit step by step, and tackling any issues in a co-ordinated way, making use of all the powers available. Where planning permission is not required, the use of traditional designs and materials for alterations and repairs as appropriate will be encouraged as the responsibility of property owners. Political commitment to achievement of the priorities and allocation of resources will be important, priority for Conservation Areas is a core activity of the Council and needs to be supported by elected members, Council leadership and all departments. Increased understanding of historic places will lead to better informed decisions overall, vital for the creation of environments to be proud of. HELM (Historic Environment Local Management) is part of Historic England's wider commitment to provide the tools for local authorities to manage change in the historic environment, and can provide training for Members and Officers, as well as guidance documents. The process of enhancement can be tackled incrementally, as resources permit, on a step by step basis moving towards the long term strategy. The overall situation will require monitoring using a periodic photographic survey to monitor change over time, identify new issues and to measure success.

Generic guidelines and actions

Development Management

Planning permission is required for new development, material changes to the external appearance of unlisted buildings and changes of use, with exceptions. Conservation Areas are not intended to prevent change but to ensure that it takes place in an appropriate way which retains and enhances the special qualities of the area. Planning applications for development in Conservation Areas need to be supported by a Design and Access Statement which explains the design thinking behind the application and the effect on the historic and architectural interest of the Conservation Area to ensure that it has been given proper consideration. A description of the significance of the heritage assets affected, the contribution of their setting to that significance and an assessment of the impact of the proposal on that significance should be included. Design and development briefs will be encouraged for any substantial development proposals.

Planning Permission is required to demolish a building or structure in a Conservation Area over a certain size, and specific controls apply to Listed Buildings. There will be a

strong presumption in favour of retaining buildings, features and boundary treatment which make a positive contribution to a Conservation Area, unlisted buildings of particular interest, protection of significant views, trees, tree groups and skyline features. Removal of buildings making a negative contribution can however enhance a Conservation Area.

Pre-application advice will be encouraged prior to proposals reaching the application stage to ensure that the applicant is aware of relevant matters. Increased understanding of historic places leads to better informed decisions, vital for the creation and efficient management of environments which the community can take pride in. Incremental change can make significant differences over time, and with guidance such changes can be beneficial.

Applications will be considered for their suitability based on National and Local policies (see Policy Background above). Within Conservation Areas design policies are more stringent whilst other planning policies, such as car parking requirements, may be applied more flexibly because the need for new proposals to be sympathetic with their surroundings is more important in order to avoid erosion of the local distinctiveness, diversity, attractiveness and historic continuity which is very vulnerable to change. Conservation Area Appraisals will also be used to assess how applications affect the special interest of the area. Decisions will be based on such policies to achieve fairness and consistency of approach. Applications for sites within or close to a Conservation Area will be considered by the Council's Conservation Officer (who will have relevant qualifications, long experience or both) and, in the case of more significant proposals, Historic England, the Government's Conservation Adviser. Applications in Conservation Areas will be advertised in the local press and by site notice and local bodies such as Town and Parish Councils are consulted. All observations received will be considered in reaching a decision. Proposals affecting the setting of a Conservation Area should endeavour to ensure that views in and out of the Area remain unspoilt.

The Southern Staffordshire Design Awards scheme seeks nominations every two years for new development of particular quality and includes schemes affecting listed buildings and in Conservation Areas. The Council welcomes nominations for the scheme as an incentive for raising design standards in the District.

- Pre-application advice will be encouraged
- Design and Access Statements will be required for planning applications including householder development to address design thinking and impact on special architectural/historic interest. They should explain how the design has taken account of the special architectural/historic interest of the area, and explain the approach to ensuring that this is preserved or enhanced. If aspects of the design impact on this they should explain what measures have been taken to minimise this impact.
- Design and development briefs will be encouraged for substantial proposals
- A Heritage Statement will be required for applications within or affecting the setting of Conservation Areas

- Applications within or adjacent to a Conservation Area will be assessed by the Council's Conservation Officer and, for larger scale proposals, Historic England
- Consideration of applications will be informed by the relevant Appraisal for the Conservation Area
- Consideration will be given to the preparation of design guidance covering specific issues
- Consent to demolish a building in a Conservation Area will be granted only (i) where it can be shown that it is wholly beyond repair, incapable of beneficial use, of inappropriate structure or design, where its removal or replacement would benefit the character or appearance of the Area and (ii) where there are approved detailed plans for redevelopment.
- There will be a strong presumption in favour of retention of buildings, features and boundary treatment making a positive contribution, unlisted buildings of special interest, Local List buildings, protection of significant views, trees and tree groups and skyline features.
- When considering new development outside but affecting the setting of the Conservation Area the Council will endeavour to ensure that proposals respect the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and that views in and out remain unspoilt.
- The Council will encourage nominations for the Southern Staffordshire Design Awards seeking to raise design standards in Conservation Areas.

Enforcement Strategy

Where the development management process is not followed in whole or in part and alterations/development is unauthorised or conditions attached to planning permissions are not met enforcement action is available to the Council to secure appropriate control. Enforcement action is at the Council's discretion however will always be used when the character or appearance of a Conservation Area is threatened. Under S215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 the Council may also serve a S215 Notice on an owner/occupier of any land or building the condition of which is adversely affecting the amenity of the area, particularly within a Conservation Area. Such a Notice requires the person to clean up the site or the Council can carry out the work itself and reclaim the cost from the owner.

- Enforcement action will be pursued if the Council consider that the character or appearance of a Conservation Area or its setting is threatened by unauthorised development
- S215 powers will be used if the Council consider that the condition of a building/land is affecting amenity in a Conservation Area

Article 4 Directions

An 'Article 4 Direction' is a procedure available to the Council to remove all or part of the 'permitted development' rights, as set out in Article 4 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development)(England)Order 2015. Such directions have a role to play if they would help to protect key features of a Conservation Area from loss or

detriment. They need to be supported by a clear assessment of the importance of such features to the special interest of the Area. Some Conservation Areas have already undergone significant loss of historic features so survey and justification is important in each case. Under Article 4 the Secretary of State or the Council may direct that any specified development otherwise permitted shall not be carried out without planning permission and includes the ability to require planning permission for the demolition of a non-designated heritage asset, such as a Locally Listed building, outside a conservation area, by removing the demolition rights under Part 31 of the Order. Planning Practice Guidance 2014 advises that generally such rights should be withdrawn only in exceptional circumstances where the exercise of permitted development rights would harm local amenity, the historic environment or the proper planning of the area. Where Article 4 Directions have been used, Councils generally feel they have been effective. Where a Direction is served the Council must notify local people and take account of their views before deciding whether to confirm the Direction within 6 months. Once confirmed the Council must give notice in a local newspaper and normally serve notice on occupiers of all affected properties.

- The Council will give consideration to the use of Article 4 Directions based on a survey and justification in each case with the decision to confirm taking account of public views

Public Realm Enhancement Strategy

Communal space, the space between buildings comprising highway and public open space, usually lies at the heart of Conservation Areas. Enhancement of the 'public realm' gives huge benefits and its design and management can be significant in reinforcing historic character. The Historic England document 'Streets for All' provides a manual of good practice on the management of streets for all those responsible in any way for their appearance. Its primary aim is to show how practical solutions to common highway problems can be achieved in an appropriate way. The underlying principles are to reduce clutter, co-ordinate design and reinforce local character. In addition Staffordshire County Council's publication 'Conservation within the Highway: Structures of Historic Importance' (2004) sets out repair and design principles in relation to the historic environment.

It is essential that improvements are directed with specialist skill and based on a detailed appraisal and understanding of the qualities that contribute to local distinctiveness. Enhancement proposals should be informed by historical research, retaining existing historic features and surfaces in their original locations wherever possible. New proposals should aim to minimise physical obstruction and visual clutter, and new signs and street furniture should be properly integrated in the designed landscape of the street as a whole. Road signs and marking can have a significant effect on the appearance of a Conservation Area, and essential signs should be of a character and quality appropriate to their context. Barriers, road humps and islands inevitably introduce modern, alien elements, but the impact can be lessened if design and materials relate to the overall townscape. The main components which create the appearance of streets are ground surfaces, street furniture, traffic management and environmental improvements. The

public realm must evolve to meet modern requirements, and expectations for accessibility must be taken into account, together with the implications of new equipment such as CCTV and recycling facilities.

Traditional approaches to traffic engineering have assumed that clear segregation between traffic and pedestrians is essential and have understandably required consistency and standardisation of signs, signals and markings. Such methods are being challenged by a new approach using shared surfaces and new priorities placing greater emphasis on walking, cycling, public transport and accessibility for all.

Existing tree cover makes an important contribution to the appearance and character of a Conservation Area, giving both visual and environmental value. Conservation Area designation places protection over all trees, and some trees which make a particular contribution have the additional protection of Tree Preservation Orders. New tree planting and landscape features can be used to enhance the streetscape and spaces between buildings and should reflect the history, architecture and tradition of places. They should form part of the overall urban context, and be selected and located on the basis of the specialist advice of the Council's Landscape Officer (who will have relevant qualifications, long experience or both). New planting should be used only where it makes a positive contribution to the townscape.

A high quality public realm can be achieved if those responsible for its management work together, and good design should be normal working practice. A public realm strategy based on the good practice guidance of Historic England's 'Streets for All' (West Midlands) is proposed.

- The Council will adopt the 'good practice' principles set out in the Historic England manual 'Streets for All' (West Midlands) and Staffordshire County Council's 'Conservation within the Highway: Structures of Historic Importance' and will work with Staffordshire County Council as Highways Authority in considering proposals affecting the public realm
- Applications within or adjacent to a Conservation Area will be assessed by the Council's Conservation, Tree Protection and Landscape Officers.
- Consideration of any work required to trees or tree removal in connection with development proposals will be informed by the Council's District Design Guide SPD and the relevant Conservation Area Appraisal.

Encouragement to repair and raise standards

Where historic features, and even good modern designs in appropriate materials, make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of a Conservation Area, the presumption will be for retention and careful repair wherever possible rather than replacement to retain the historic integrity of the area. Similarly regular maintenance of the built environment, including historic boundary treatment, can be the key to avoiding the kind of incremental change which can be damaging. Special architectural or historic interest is very vulnerable to the process of modernisation and the upgrading of property does not have to be at the expense of historic fabric and character. Authentic features

should be valued aesthetically and are often reflected in the monetary value of property. Standards can be raised above the mediocre. Many small changes do not require any consent and so their retention relies on the commitment of the local community, Town and Parish Councils and local amenity societies, which will be encouraged.

The profile of conservation can also be raised through increased awareness promoted through the Heritage Champion. This is a senior member of the Council, usually an elected member, nominated to promote historic environment issues at the highest level of the organisation. Cannock Chase Council has had a Heritage Champion for several years who continues to play an important role in ensuring that key strategic decisions are taken with full consideration of their potential effect on the historic environment and encourage understanding across Council Departments.

Town/Parish Councils and local amenity societies make an essential contribution to the process and are consulted on planning applications and policy documents for their opinions. Their local knowledge is a valuable resource in identifying local character and issues, and strong links with the Council are encouraged.

- The Council will provide advice through its website, leaflets and officers on aspects of repairs to buildings and give consideration to the preparation of design guidance covering specific issues
- The involvement of the Council's Heritage Champion will be maximised
- Links with Town/Parish Councils and local amenity societies will be strengthened and promoted together with the involvement of the local community in managing and enhancing the character and appearance of a Conservation Area
- The understanding and awareness of conservation issues will be promoted across Council departments and in dealing with other authorities and public bodies focussing on the responsibility to pay regard to the special architectural or historic interest of Conservation Areas

Regeneration

High quality places attract investors, residents and businesses, and making best use of existing buildings and areas lies at the heart of a sustainable future. Several of the District's Conservation Areas are focussed on commercial areas, including the town centres of Cannock and Rugeley. Conservation-led regeneration has a vital role to play in social and economic regeneration. A significant number of buildings in Rugeley town centre, in particular, have suffered from longstanding lack of maintenance above ground floor level, and some underuse. The historic fabric has been slowly deteriorating leading to pressure for replacement rather than conservation and repair of traditional detailing, which in itself has resulted in incremental detriment to character and appearance over time with a negative impact on the attractiveness of the town centre for users.

The key to addressing deterioration of urban fabric is enhancement of vitality and viability of the town centres and encouragement of property owners to take care of their buildings. Positive encouragement through partnership/grant schemes has been very successful in other towns. Conservation of the built environment can act as a catalyst for

wider regeneration and to encourage inward investment to benefit the local economy and community. An Area Action Plan for Rugeley town centre forms part of the adopted Local Plan (Part1) 2014.

Funding is available nationally from Historic England through their Partnership Schemes in Conservation Areas (PSICA) and from the Heritage Lottery Fund through the Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI). PSICA are designed to target funding for the preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas. Priority is currently given to industrial centres or market towns in decline with scope for regeneration, areas of clear economic need and with potential for attracting funding for such works as repairs to structures and external fabric of historic buildings, reinstatement of architectural features and work to repair and reinstate the public realm, where this would help to reinforce the commercial attractiveness and local distinctiveness of an area. The THI was launched in 1998 to support strategic action to address problems of disrepair, erosion of quality and under use of buildings in historic areas, with priority given to schemes in areas of social and economic deprivation. Proposed schemes need to be large enough to have an impact on the historic area as a whole and may include the repair of the structure and external envelope of historic buildings and structures, authentic reinstatement of architectural features, bring vacant floor space in historic buildings back into use, and repair and reinstate elements lost from the public realm. The partners contribute to a common fund to which the HLF also contributes, which can be used to meet the cost of a project officer/team and make grants towards costs of eligible work.

Funding was secured for a PSICA in Rugeley Conservation Areas focussed on the town centre and a repairs scheme has taken place between 2011-16 which is now bringing several buildings back into full commercial use and enhancing the appearance of the town centre. The scheme has funded Feasibility Studies of two further buildings in nearby conservation areas with the aspiration of giving them a new lease of life.

Historic urban settlements including market towns and the historic transport network are amongst the features of particular historic significance to the West Midlands. The towns and canal corridor within Cannock Chase District therefore deserve special attention. Local Plan (Part 1) promotes the historic environment as a catalyst for the regeneration of the District.

- The Council will give consideration to the potential for attracting national funding as a means to the long term enhancement of Cannock and Rugeley town centres

Creation of a Local List

The preparation and adoption of a 'Local List' has been strongly supported by Central Government since 1994 and is now given effect in the NPPF 2012. This includes within its definition of 'heritage assets' those identified by the Council, for example through Local Listing. Preparation of a Local List for the District is being taken forward through the District Design Guide SPD which includes a procedure for compiling a List of local heritage assets which are valued by the community in contributing to the local distinctiveness, character and appearance of the area. The Local List would not bring

additional controls, above and beyond those required for planning permission, but would be a material consideration in planning decisions directly affecting them or their setting.

A key feature envisaged is consultation with local people in defining the significance of the historic environment in their locality. Town and Parish Councils will have an important role to play in this process. Sites will be of architectural, historic, archaeological or landscape interest, making a positive contribution to the local distinctiveness, character, appearance and heritage of the area, be in or close to their original condition, and can be either within a Conservation Area or outside. The aim of the policy will be to ensure significant sites, currently with little or no protection, are properly considered in planning proposals that could adversely affect them or their surroundings and that any work carried out affecting them is sympathetic.

- The Council will proceed to draw up a ‘Local List’ of locally significant buildings throughout the District, including in Conservation Areas
- There will be a presumption against the demolition or unsympathetic alteration of buildings and features on the Local List, and planning applications affecting them will be assessed by the Council’s Conservation Officer.

Condition monitoring of Listed Buildings in Conservation Areas

Buildings of special architectural or historic interest nationally can be included on the statutory List to which controls apply to all works of alteration or extension which would affect the character of the building, including demolition. Historic buildings once lost cannot be replaced, and they can be robbed of their special interest as surely by unsuitable alteration as by demolition. They represent a finite resource and an irreplaceable asset. It is a criminal offence to carry out such works to Listed buildings without consent. Regular maintenance and repair are the key to the preservation of historic buildings. Unless there are intrinsic defects of design or materials their lifespan may be indefinite provided that timely maintenance and occasional more major repairs are regularly undertaken. Major problems are very often the result of neglect. Regular inspection is invaluable. Monitoring the general condition of listed buildings, or unlisted buildings which make a positive contribution to a Conservation Area, are a means of identifying buildings at risk as early as possible. There is no specific duty on owners to keep their buildings in a good state of repair, though it will normally be in their interest to do so.

Local authorities have powers to take action where a historic building has deteriorated to the extent that its preservation may be at risk through service of an ‘Urgent Work Notice’ or ‘Repairs Notice’. Urgent Works powers are confined to emergency repairs to unoccupied buildings to keep the building wind and weather proof and safe from collapse, or action to prevent vandalism or theft. A Repairs Notice can be served in cases where protracted failure by an owner to keep a listed building in reasonable repair places the building at risk. If at least two months have elapsed following service of a Repairs Notice and it appears to the local authority that reasonable steps are not being taken for the proper preservation of the building they may begin compulsory purchase proceedings.

The possible need to follow action up with a compulsory purchase order is something which must be taken into account when considering such action.

- The Council will give consideration to conducting regular routine monitoring of the general external condition of listed buildings in Conservation Areas and unlisted buildings which make a positive contribution to a Conservation Area, followed by appropriate action, taking account of specific circumstances.

Designation of new Conservation Areas and reviewing boundaries

From time to time the Council will consider whether an area of the District with a special definable architectural or historic interest should be designated as a Conservation Area. These are mostly historic settlements, such as Rugeley and Brereton, but can cover other historic features, such as the Trent and Mersey Canal. There is no formal designation procedure however notification of designation must be publicised, taking effect from the date of resolution of the Council. In a similar way the periodic review of existing Conservation Area boundaries will take place. Conservation Areas can vary greatly but certain aspects almost always form the basis of defining significance – topography and its historical development, archaeological significance, prevalent building materials, character and hierarchy of spaces, quality and relationship of buildings, trees and green spaces. Current best practice favours consultation with local occupiers/residents, Ward and Parish Councillors and local interest groups prior to designation.

- The Council will give consideration to designating new Conservation Areas and reviewing the boundaries of existing Conservation Areas from time to time.

Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans

An up to date Conservation Area Appraisal provides a clear assessment of the character of a Conservation Area to provide a sound basis for decision making and for developing initiatives to improve the area. It is vital that the special interest justifying designation is clearly defined and analysed. Public participation is an integral part of the Appraisal process. Legislation places a duty on the Council to draw up and publish proposals for preserving and enhancing Conservation Areas and to consult the local community on the proposals. The character Appraisal provides a basis for developing management proposals for the Conservation Area that will fulfil this general duty. The Management Plan should be mid-long term strategy, setting objectives for addressing issues and recommendations for action arising from the Appraisal.

- The Council will prepare, consult on and adopt Appraisals and Management Plans to cover all of its Conservation Areas.
- The Council will endeavour to review these documents on a regular basis (5 year cycle) and update Conservation Area boundaries, record changes over time using photographic survey and revise the management strategy as necessary as a result of this review. The updated Appraisal and Management Plan will then be readopted.

Building Regulations

Part L of the Building Regulations makes clear that the special characteristics of a historic building must be recognised, so aim to improve energy efficiency as far as possible without adversely affecting historic fabric and appearance. Historic buildings for this purpose include listed buildings, buildings situated in Conservation Areas, buildings which are of local architectural or historic interest (on a 'Local List') and which are referred to as a material consideration in a Local Authority's development plan, and buildings of architectural and historic interest in national parks, area of outstanding natural beauty and world heritage sites.

- The Council will take account of the special characteristics of historic buildings and consult its Conservation Officer as appropriate when carrying out its duties under the Building Regulations to avoid harm to character and appearance