

- CONSERVATION GUIDANCE SHEET -

# **A GUIDE TO PLANNING IN CONSERVATION AREAS**



*Every building matters in a conservation area, and the streets, public spaces and gardens between them. These features give the area its special character.*

*This is something that should be protected, so there are special controls over what you can do to buildings within conservation areas. The overall appearance of the area and its trees are also protected.*

*This guide explains how a conservation area affects you and your property.*



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**STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL**



*Conservation areas are designated to protect the character of an area in all its aspects. These are attractive houses in their own right but it is the relationship between them, the bridge, the boundary walls, canal, trees and the open landscape setting which together is so special.*



*Walls and gates are critical links between buildings and between people, inviting or preventing access. In conservation areas there are stricter controls than elsewhere over alterations to boundary features.*

**Demolition of any building or structure that falls under conservation area controls, without having obtained prior Conservation Area Consent, is a criminal offence and is liable to prosecution.**

## WHAT ARE CONSERVATION AREAS?

Each of the conservation areas in Stroud District has been designated because of its high quality historic built environment. The legal definition of a Conservation Area is set out in Section 69 of the 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act as;

*“an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”*

Most commonly, conservation areas cover the historic parts of our towns and villages, but some protect other special places, such as the canals and the mills that contribute to the Stroud valleys’ exceptional industrial heritage.

Conservation areas invariably have a concentration of historic buildings, many of which are **listed buildings**, but the area’s character and attraction comprises more than the buildings alone. The uses they are put to and the spaces around and between them are also important – so a conservation area protects the whole area and not just the buildings within it.

Conservation Areas are designated by Stroud District Council, following public consultation. From time to time the Council reviews the areas and their boundaries.

## WHAT HAS THIS GOT TO DO WITH ME?

Within a conservation area there are extra planning controls over many building works. These extra controls are outlined on the following pages. Additionally, you will find that special criteria are applied when assessing any planning applications in a conservation area, to ensure that proposals respect its character. This may affect alterations to an existing building or new building work which you are considering.

The aim is not to prevent all change, but to control and manage it to preserve what is special about the area and, where possible, improve it. The Council is well aware that conservation areas are home to many people and businesses, with needs that must also be considered.

## ARE THERE ANY CONTROLS OVER DEMOLITION?

Yes. You will need **conservation area consent** to demolish almost any building (with a volume of 115 cubic metres or more) and certain other structures in a conservation area. Consent is needed, for example, to demolish a boundary wall, fence or gate if it is at least 2 metres high. If it is more than 1 metre high and fronts a highway, public right-of-way or an open space you would also need conservation area consent.

There are some exceptions but it is best to seek advice from the Council’s Planning Enquiries Officer before demolishing anything, even where the intention is to rebuild in replica. Consent for demolition is also needed under the building acts.



The variety of different buildings in this street is unified by consistent elements such as the same building material and painted timber windows with delicate glazing bars. New buildings and alterations in conservation areas need to maintain this kind of consistency. Unsympathetic window replacements, for example, would erode the buildings' character and architectural quality.



New development in conservation areas must respect the character of its surroundings. This need not mean direct imitation or 'pastiche', though.



This row of houses has drawn upon the basic characteristics of its neighbour, an old mill building, but transformed them into an honest, modern interpretation. The new build does respect things like the mass, scale, palette of materials and colours and relationship to natural landscape features that typify buildings in the area.

## DO THESE CONTROLS EXTEND TO TREES?

Yes. Anyone who wants to fell a tree in a conservation area, prune its roots or branches, or carry out other work which might damage it, must inform the Council at least six weeks in advance. This is to give the Council time to inspect the tree, consult the Parish or Town Council and any other local amenity group, and if necessary, to consider serving a **Tree Preservation Order (TPO)**.

The Council's Tree and Landscape Officer will advise you on the notification procedure. You will be told within six weeks of your application whether you can go ahead with the work or not.

## IS PLANNING PERMISSION REQUIRED FOR MINOR WORK IN A CONSERVATION AREA?

Often, in conservation areas, planning permission is required where otherwise minor work would have been considered as **permitted development**. For example, in a conservation area you need planning permission for extensions of more than 50 cubic metres (or 10% of the original volume of the house), where elsewhere the threshold is usually 70 cubic metres (15%). You would also need permission to apply artificial stone cladding to a dwelling house, to erect a satellite dish (depending on its size and siting on the building), or to install a dormer window. There are also strict controls over advertisements.

The rules on this are complicated and it is always best to seek advice from the Planning Department (Planning Enquiries).

In a few particular conservation areas, the Council has also removed some of the permitted development rights that would otherwise exist even in a conservation area. For example, you may normally alter or replace windows on a house (although not on a flat), or erect a porch, without planning permission. If, however, such changes are spoiling a conservation area the Council may take away permitted development rights by making an **Article 4 Direction**.

## HOW ARE PLANNING APPLICATIONS DEALT WITH IN CONSERVATION AREAS?

Any planning application for a site within a conservation area (or a site which would affect its setting) is assessed against more stringent criteria than it would be outside the conservation area. Planning applications in conservation areas are advertised in local newspapers. We also post a notice on the site, inform your neighbours and consult your Town or Parish Council.

The Council requires applications to be accompanied by detailed drawings for all developments in conservation areas and will not normally accept '**outline planning applications**'. Applications should also show how proposed works relate to neighbouring buildings, so that we can judge how your proposal will appear alongside them.

## HOW WILL THE COUNCIL DECIDE WHAT IS APPROPRIATE?

When you make an application, a Planning Officer will visit the site. The majority of planning applications are determined under **Delegated Powers** by a group of senior Planning Officers and should be dealt with within an eight week period. Larger or more contentious applications may take longer and may be determined by Councillors at a full **Planning Committee** meeting, which takes place on a monthly basis. Planning Officers' recommendations are made in the light of planning policies set out by both the Government and the District Council. The Council's policies are contained in the Stroud District Local Plan. Under these, the Council will not normally give planning permission for proposals in a conservation area, or affecting its setting, if;

- it would mean the loss of a building, structure or particular features which make a positive contribution to the character, appearance or historic value of the area;
- it obscures or damages important views within, into, or out of the conservation area;
- the proposed development fails to respect existing open spaces, patterns of building layout, trees, hedges, walls, fences, etc;
- the proposal was out of scale, unsympathetic to or incompatible with the characteristic form of the area or adjacent buildings, in terms of design, proportions, detailing and materials;
- the proposal would result in an increase of traffic, which was not capable of being catered for in a way which would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area

## WHAT SORT OF DEVELOPMENT IS ACCEPTABLE?

Something that fits into the local scene. The best starting point is to look at the area around your property - the shapes and proportions of the buildings; the architectural styles and materials used; the boundary treatments; the quality of traditional craftsmanship; also those small details that make your conservation area particularly attractive and distinctive.

This does not mean that all new buildings have to be exact replicas of past styles. The Council welcomes innovation and imagination in design - so long as the proposal is of high quality and is in character with and, ideally, enhances the conservation area. If you prefer to build in a locally typical 'traditional' style, then great care and skill is needed. In some conservation areas helpful advice is provided in separate **Conservation Area Statements**, and the Conservation Team may be able to give you some pointers.

## WHAT ARE CONSERVATION AREA STATEMENTS?

The District Council has an ongoing programme of production of these documents for each of the District's conservation areas. They describe the history of the area and what makes it so special. They provide guidance on the features that justify the conservation area designation and give detailed design guidance for new development. The Conservation Area Statements so far published are available, at a small charge, from the Planning Department and can also be viewed on the Council's website.



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For further advice and information, please contact:

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## Where can I get more information?

This leaflet only provides a summary of what a conservation area involves. It is not a comprehensive statement of the law, the basis of which is found in the **1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act**.

You can find detailed information on the Government's policy in relation to the historic environment in its **planning policy guidance note, PPG15** (this can be found on the Planning pages of the government's website: [www.odpm.gov.uk](http://www.odpm.gov.uk)). PPG15 forms a framework for planning policy nationwide, within which **Stroud District Council's Local Plan** policies are based. The Built Environment chapter of the current version of the District's Local Plan contains policies on development within or affecting the setting of a conservation area.



DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

**STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL**

With thanks to Cotswold District Council.  
This guidance sheet is based upon their document 'Conservation Areas: A guide for owners and occupiers'