

# CONSERVATION AREAS

## GUIDANCE ON REPAIRS AND ALTERATIONS

July 2017



# CONSERVATION AREA GUIDANCE

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 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”, as set out in Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Under this legislation, local authorities have a duty to designate such areas and to review them from time to time. They should also use their planning powers to safeguard and enhance the special qualities of these areas by ensuring development is managed to create positive change. Designation automatically entails control over the demolition of unlisted buildings, strengthens controls over minor development and gives special protection to trees within the area.
- 1.2 Once designated a conservation area needs everyone’s help to protect its character and keep it special. The Council will protect and enhance it as far as possible by controlling development, and encouraging the care of its own buildings, but it also needs the support of property owners, residents and local businesses if this is to be successfully achieved.

## 2. Conservation Area Appraisals

- 2.1 Conservation area appraisals are a commonly used technique to identify and assess the character of a conservation area. The more clearly that character or special interest is defined, the easier it is to manage change without damaging that interest. A clear and comprehensive appraisal of the character of a conservation area provides a sound basis for the control of development, and for developing initiatives to improve the area.
- 2.2 The Council has prepared a series of Conservation Area Appraisals, and these documents provide a detailed assessment of the special character of each conservation area. They were subject to a process of internal and public consultation before the conservation areas were formally designated by the Council. The Appraisals are used in the consideration of planning proposals within the conservation areas, and can be viewed on the Council’s Website <https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Residents/Libraries-arts-and-heritage/Blackpool-heritage/Conservation-areas-and-listed-buildings/Conservation-areas-listed-buildings-and-trees-conservation.aspx> .
- 2.3 A series of Conservation Area Management Plans are being developed which support the Appraisals and set out a number of actions aimed at safeguarding or enhancing the special character of these areas. In addition, design guides for replacement windows and shop fronts will aid development and change within conservation areas.

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- 2.4 When considering planning applications affecting conservation areas the Council will give special consideration to the desire to preserve or enhance the character of the area. Planning applications for development affecting conservation areas have to be advertised locally both on site and in a local newspaper, giving members of the public a period of 21 days in which to comment upon them.
3. **Restrictions on development**
- 3.1 In a conservation area, planning permission is required for work that would ordinarily constitute permitted development. This includes:
- exterior cladding
  - side extensions, or the construction of any other building or structure to the side of the house
  - rear extensions to a house of more than one storey
  - enlargement of a house which would include alterations to the roof
  - the installation, alteration or replacement of a chimney, flue or soil and vent pipe visible from the highway
  - erection of an aerial or satellite dish on a house facing the highway
  - erection of solar panels on roofs or walls on a house facing the highway
  - limits on the size of domestic and industrial extensions
  - demolition of all, and in some cases part, of any building or structure
- 3.2 If the conservation area is subject to an article 4 direction development is more restricted, and you should contact the Built Heritage and Conservation Team for advice before undertaking any alterations at [builtheritage@blackpool.gov.uk](mailto:builtheritage@blackpool.gov.uk) or telephone 01253 476332.
- 3.3 Changes to features which contribute to the character of the conservation area such as original windows may need planning permission. You should contact the Built Heritage and Conservation Team for advice before commencing any works to clarify whether or not planning permission is required. Works carried out without the relevant planning permission will be liable to enforcement action.
- 3.4 If planning permission is required you will need to include a heritage statement with your planning application which sets out the intended development, its impact on the character of the building and the conservation area, and the justification for the work. More detailed advice is available at <https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Residents/Planning-environment-and-community/Documents/Heritage-Statement-Guidance.pdf>

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- 3.5 Where an article 4 direction is in force planning applications are usually free for such works, and you should contact the planning department for confirmation and further advice if required at [planning@blackpool.gov.uk](mailto:planning@blackpool.gov.uk)

## 4. Work to buildings in conservation areas

- 4.1 When considering changes to your property it is important to bear in mind the following principles:
- a) Maintenance - regular maintenance is needed to protect original features, but if more extensive work is found to be necessary, repair rather than replacement should be the first option and will often be better value. Generally repairs do not need planning permission unless they include alterations which significantly change the external appearance of the house or building. The essence of repair is that it is carried out on a 'like for like' basis, matching materials and details.
  - b) Materials and design - when considering extensions, alterations or repairs to your property its original materials and design should be respected.
  - c) Enhancement - take the opportunity to enhance the property when considering alterations, by restoring any missing features and improving poorly designed alterations of the past. Sometimes alterations will have been carried out in the past which have had a negative effect on a house or building, and owners are encouraged to reverse these when the opportunity arises.

## 5. Windows

- 5.1 Original windows make a major contribution to the character of a building and the wider conservation area. If your house or building has original timber or metal framed windows these should be repaired and retained wherever possible, unless it can be demonstrated that they are beyond economic repair, because they are vital for preserving the character of the conservation area. As a rough guide 3/5<sup>th</sup> of a window should be severely deteriorated before complete replacement will be supported.
- 5.2 Timber windows can be given a new lease of life by overhauling them and installing draught proofing. Secondary glazing is also acceptable if it is unobtrusive. There are several companies which specialize in overhauling timber sliding sashes in order to improve their efficiency including energy efficiency, and their advice should be sought in the first instance. Please see the Council's Window Design Guide for Conservation Areas for further information.

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- 5.3 Original windows which are beyond economic repair should be replaced with windows which resemble the originals in design and materials, although slimline timber double glazing may be an acceptable alternative. You should seek the advice of the Conservation and Built Heritage Team before undertaking any changes to windows.



**Guest house with original sliding sashes**

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- 5.4 If you are considering replacing existing upvc double glazing, perhaps because it has reached the end of its life, the Council's Window Design Guide for Conservation Areas has more detailed information about designs which are acceptable. For example, upvc double glazing with top hung opening windows may have been installed previously to replace timber sliding sashes, which is an inappropriate design. Modern double glazing also usually has a bulky frame to accommodate the two panes of glass and wide spacer bars, rather than the slim profile of original timber windows. Top hung opening windows which overlap the frame add to the width of the frames. Replacement frames should always be white; planning permission will be required if you propose to install windows with frames which are not white.



Upvc window frame with 'stick on' glazing bars and top hung upper window

- 5.5 Mock Georgian multi-pane windows will not be permitted unless this was a prevalent original design in the conservation area, or there is evidence that this is the original design for the property in question. If this design is approved for upvc windows the glazing bars would need to be applied to the interior and exterior of the window, with duplex bars within the unit to recreate the effect of separate panes of glass. The spacer bars should be silver or white.

**N.B upvc windows are not appropriate in listed buildings and will not be permitted**

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## 6. Doors

- 6.1 Original doors should be repaired and retained. If your door is beyond economic repair, or you wish to replace a modern door with one which is more appropriate, this should be carried out in timber to an appropriate design. Your neighbouring properties may have original doors which you can use as a guide, or examples of acceptable designs are given in the Conservation Area Management Plan for each Conservation Area. Please contact the Conservation and Built Heritage Team for advice if required.



Original late Victorian panelled front door



Original 1930s front door with leaded and stained glass

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## 7. Stone bay windows

Stone bay windows should be repaired and retained. They should not be painted because this can damage the stonework through the action of rainwater penetration and frost damage.



**Modern paint traps water which freezes in the stone causing it to crack and flake away**

## 8. Canopies and awnings

Traditional retractable awnings are the appropriate design solution for shopfronts in conservation areas.

In the past curved canopies or fixed blinds have been installed above the windows and doors of some hotels and boarding houses. It is appreciated that these have been fitted to decorate the exterior of the buildings, but these are not a traditional feature and in future will not be permitted in conservation areas. Existing blinds should be removed when the opportunity arises and the brickwork or render should be repaired.

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**Modern fixed blinds on historic buildings**

## 9. Balconies and balustrades

Original balconies and balustrades are important features and should be repaired and retained. Where they are missing they should be reinstated in appropriate materials whenever the opportunity arises.



**Wrought iron balcony railings**

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## 10. Roofs

- 10.1 The roof is one of the most important parts of a building as it keeps it wind and water tight, and its appearance can also bring harmony to a townscape. The original roof material, such as natural grey or green slate or clay tiles, plus decorative ridge cresting, ridge and hip-tiles should be retained and repaired, or replaced on a like-for-like basis. Imitation slates and clay tiles are a poor substitute in quality and appearance and detract from the character of a house or building. Where individual homeowners replace roof coverings in different materials from their neighbours this undermines the uniformity of the roofscape and harms the character and appearance of the conservation area. Planning permission will usually be required for replacing the roof covering, and you should contact the Built Heritage and Conservation Team for advice.



Red clay tile roof covering to the left and modern roof tile to the right of this pair of semi-detached villas

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### 11. Fascias, bargeboards and rainwater goods

Decorative timber fascias and bargeboards, and features such as finials, can also contribute significantly to the character and appearance of the roof and should be retained and maintained where they exist. Where these features are missing or have been replaced with modern materials they should be replaced when the opportunity arises. This is particularly important in relation to terraced or semi-detached houses where individual approaches to these features can undermine the character and appearance of the whole block.

Rainwater gutters and downpipes would originally have been cast iron on historic houses and buildings. If you have original cast iron rainwater goods these should be repaired and retained, or replaced with cast aluminium. If you are replacing existing upvc rainwater goods you may replace them with black upvc as a minimum.



**Decorative eaves brackets**

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**Terracotta finial and ridge cresting**

## 12. **Roof lifts**

Many existing and former hotels and boarding houses have had roof lifts installed in the past. These have had a particularly detrimental effect in conservation areas where historic rooflines have been disrupted. Where modern roof lifts exist outside designated holiday areas, owners are encouraged to remove them if the opportunity arises and reinstate the original roof covering together with any decorative detailing if this is apparent on neighbouring properties.

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**Differently designed roof lifts on a single terrace**

### 13. **Rooflights and dormer windows**

The conversion of loft space often requires the installation of dormer windows or rooflights, which can have a negative impact on the appearance of a building and detract from the wider street scene or roofscape. In some streets dormer windows may be acceptable, but they must be designed to sit sensitively within the roofscape and street scene: often this will mean a small, pitched roof dormer of a traditional design and materials. Rooflights should be in the 'conservation style' to sit flush with the roof slates or tiles, taking care that they are limited in size and number, and carefully located so as not to affect the character of the property, preferably restricted to the rear elevation wherever possible. In addition, where possible rooflights should be aligned with existing windows and should have a vertical emphasis.

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Roof lights which are higher than the front roof slope

### 14. **Decorative gables**

Original decorative gables, for example with elaborate barge boards and painted render with applied timber, should be repaired and retained. Where gables have been altered in the past they should be reinstated to resemble the original design where this can be determined from neighbouring properties.



Original half-timbered gables to the right, upvc clad gables to the left

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## 15. Chimneys

Chimneys often make a major contribution to the character of a conservation area and should be repaired and retained. Planning permission will be required for their removal, and will require strong justification.



Chimneys in Stanley Park Conservation Area



Chimneys in Raikes Hall Conservation Area

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## 16. Extensions

New extensions should always be subservient in scale and height to the main building, and should be built in materials that respect and complement the host building and its surroundings. This may involve the use of matching traditional materials or contrasting modern materials. As a general rule, side extensions should be no more than single storey and set back from the front elevation. Garages attached to the host building will be treated as extensions, and should be built to a similar design and in matching materials.

Extensions to the rear of properties where there is a back street should be carefully designed to avoid piecemeal and disjointed rear street scenes. Rear extensions should generally not exceed two storeys in height, should sit below the existing eaves level where possible, and should seek to maintain or re-establish a continuous building line where this is visible from a main highway. New outbuildings which are visible from the highway will be expected to complement the design and materials of the host building.

## 17. Boundary treatments

Original boundary treatments, such as walls, railings and hedges, play an important part in the character and appearance of a conservation area and should be retained. Where they have been removed in the past they should be reinstated wherever possible and should be replicated in terms of material, proportions and design in order to enhance the character of the conservation area. Planning permission may be required for the total or partial removal of a boundary wall. Always contact the Built Heritage and Conservation Team for advice.



**Wrought iron railings on Adelaide Street**

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Modern decorative boundary wall treatments such as concrete block walling are not appropriate in a conservation area and will not be permitted in future. Existing concrete block walling should be removed if the opportunity arises.



**Modern decorative concrete block walling**

### 18. **Brickwork and pointing**

Repointing of masonry is sometimes necessary; on a traditional house or building this should generally be carried out in a lime mortar, rather than cement, in order to protect the bricks from frost damage.

Masonry which has traditionally not been rendered and/or painted should remain undecorated as painting masonry can be very damaging, and will undermine the character of the house or building and the wider conservation area. Where buildings have already been cladded, rendered and/or painted, advice should be sought from the Built Heritage and Conservation Team before repainting or other works are undertaken. Besides having a negative impact on character, rendering or painting historic masonry can cause damp issues internally.

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Late Victorian building repointed with cement mortar which has led to frost damage

### 19. **Aerials, satellite dishes, CCTV and alarm boxes**

Aerials, satellite dishes, CCTV equipment and alarm boxes can have a detrimental impact on the appearance of a house or building. Where possible they should be situated inside or to the rear of the property or carefully located to minimise the impact on the character of the house or building. Care must be taken when installing such features to avoid cable runs on the surface of brickwork, which can detract from the appearance of a house or building.

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Insensitively positioned satellite dishes in Foxhall Conservation Area

## 20. **Microgeneration**

Planning permission is usually required for the installation of microgeneration equipment (such as solar panels, photovoltaic cells, solar thermal water heaters and domestic wind turbines) in conservation areas. In order to be acceptable, the visual impact of the equipment must be minimised and should not be located on main elevations. It is worth noting that cutting demand for energy is as important as finding alternative means of generating it. Before deciding whether to install a renewable energy technology in a building, all available energy-saving measures, including low-energy light bulbs, heating controls and improved insulation, should already have been taken, and this information will be required as part of a planning application.

Detailed guidance on this subject can be found on Historic England's website:  
<https://www.historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/infrastructure/renewable-energy/microgeneration/>

## 21. **Insulation**

Retrospective measures such as cavity wall insulation can have a very harmful impact on the external face of a house or building and are therefore not recommended for historic buildings. The drilling associated with cavity wall insulation in particular can be extremely disfiguring to brick and stone masonry and is difficult to make good to appropriate standards.

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There are numerous alternative methods of improving insulation in historic buildings including loft insulation, upgrading of historic windows with draught seals, hanging heavy curtains, or internally lining walls, which do not have a detrimental effect on the property.

For further information on energy efficiency measures for historic buildings see Historic England's website <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/energy-efficiency-and-historic-buildings/>

## 22. Demolition

You will need to obtain planning permission for demolition works which amount to the total or substantial destruction of any house or building with a volume in excess of 115 m<sup>3</sup>. You will also need planning permission to demolish gates, fences, walls or railings over 1m high fronting a highway or public open space, or over 2m high elsewhere in the area. In addition, in conservation areas covered by an article 4 direction, permitted development rights may be removed for total or partial demolition of any boundary wall.

Planning applications which involve the substantial or total demolition of any house or building in a conservation area will be refused unless it can be demonstrated that its individual loss, and the subsequent harm caused to the character of the conservation area, is outweighed by the significant public benefit of the development. In such a case only high quality buildings in terms of design and materials will be considered.

## 23. New buildings

New development in conservation areas can be very positive, provided that it is not at the expense of existing houses or buildings of architectural or historic interest or townscape value. In addition it should not compromise green spaces that contribute positively to the character or appearance of the area.

There is no 'one size fits all' approach to designing new houses or buildings in conservation areas, as the individual site context should always be the starting point that informs the scheme. All development should preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area. In some cases a traditional design might be appropriate; in others a contemporary approach might be more successful.

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## 24. Re-using historic buildings

When historic buildings are being redeveloped for a new purpose, past unsympathetic and inappropriate alterations should be reversed wherever possible in order to restore the character of the building.



Burton's building 2014



Burton's building 2017

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## 25. **Materials**

In most circumstances a grant of planning permission will include conditions to ensure that appropriate, high quality materials are used in all developments in conservation areas; these will normally need to be approved on site by the Built Heritage and Conservation Team before you start any building work.

## 26. **Trees and gardens**

Conservation Area status gives trees within the area special protection. Trees are defined with reference to a minimum diameter of the trunk of 75mm at a point 1.5m above the ground. You will have to give six weeks' notice, in writing, to the Council of any proposed removal or pruning works to trees in a conservation area even if they are not specifically protected by a tree preservation order (TPO). In giving notice you should specify precisely what works you wish to carry out. During those six weeks the Council must decide whether or not to make the trees the subject of a Tree Preservation Order.



The original pattern of gardens and grounds and the presence of trees can contribute greatly to the character of a conservation area, and should be retained. It is a common trend to convert front gardens into hardstandings for car parking, resulting in the loss of attractive and valuable green space, and often also the loss of historic boundary walls. This can be very damaging to the appearance of both the property and the wider street scene, and advice should always be sought in the first instance. Planning permission will usually be required.

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## 27. Shopfronts and signage

Replacement shopfronts and signage should comply with SPG 6: Shopfronts and Signs. <https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Residents/Planning-environment-and-community/Planning/Planning-policy/Blackpool-local-plan/Supplementary-planning-documents-and-guidance/Supplementary-planning-documents-and-guidance.aspx>. This SPG is supplemented policies CS7, LQ 11 and LQ13, and by further guidance which is available on the Council website.



Traditional shop front on Cedar Square

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## 28. **Development will be refused where**

- a) It would harm the character or appearance of the conservation area, including historic plan form, the relationship between buildings, the arrangement of open areas and their enclosure, grain, or significant natural or heritage features;
- b) The height, siting, form, massing, proportions, design or materials would not preserve or enhance the character of the area;
- c) Development outside a conservation area which would cause harm to its setting and surroundings, or harm the inward or outward views;
- d) The proposed land use would not preserve or enhance the function and character of a conservation area; or
- e) It would involve the demolition of a building or structure which positively contributes to the character or appearance of the area.