



## 5. Conservation Areas

### 5.1 General

A 'Conservation Area' is an area designated by the Local Planning Authority under Section 69 of the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990*. It is an "area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance". It is the duty of the Local Planning Authority to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are Conservation Areas.

The City of York and its environs provide an interesting mixture of townscape and landscape; from the historic core, through urban development to the rural setting. This section sets out principles which will be adopted when considering proposals in Conservation Areas. The guidance should be taken as applying equally to the setting of any Listed Building of architectural or historic interest irrespective of whether or not it is in a Conservation Area.

One of the recurring problems in Conservation Areas is the accommodation of traffic without adversely affecting buildings and their setting. The City of York Council will seek to exercise a major influence in ensuring the success of local conservation policies, and will apply the following principles when considering new highway proposals in Conservation Areas or when carrying out maintenance works to existing highways.

New development should preserve or enhance the architectural or historic character or appearance of Conservation Areas and should respect the character and setting of Listed Buildings and of adjacent Conservation Areas.

The Authority will give due regard to the advice given in *PPG 15 – Planning and the Historic Environment*. This document highlights ways in which the highway can be dealt with sensitively, including the following:

- limited car access to particular areas;
- providing traffic calming features which reinforce rather than diminish local character, such as by using traditional materials;
- using traditional surfacing materials, such as paving;



- noting that all trees in Conservation Areas are protected;
- preserving street furniture which is of historic or architectural interest, e.g. pillar boxes, telephone kiosks, and railings;
- taking advantage of permitted flexibility in the size, siting and colour of traffic signs, and avoiding a proliferation of signs and markings where possible, and
- selecting and positioning street lighting equipment appropriate to the age and character of the surrounding area.

The Authority will permit the reduction of normal highway standards in Conservation Areas where this is compatible with safety, provided that there is a genuine environmental benefit to be gained from reducing the standards. For example:

- reduced road widths over short distances;
- reduced centre line radii;
- reduced visibility splays requirements;
- greater variation of footway widths; and
- non-standard kerb details.

Each Conservation Area has its own character, and proposals for special treatment will be individually considered. Hybrid designs may be acceptable provided that they are compatible with highway safety.

## 5.2 Urban Conservation Areas

Many Conservation Areas in York have an 'urban' character and particular features of these areas are:-

- a sense of street enclosure as a result of the proportions of road and footway width to building height; and
- the absence of large gaps in the street frontage.

New development should repeat these features and the layout and highway should be carefully designed so that large open spaces between buildings are avoided and areas accessible or visible to the public are not dominated by parked vehicles. The design guide provides sufficient flexibility to allow the width and alignment of carriageways to be varied to properly reflect the character of the area.

It is also important to consider the details of street furniture, materials, signs, etc. as an integral part of the proposal. In particular, posts, lamp columns, bollards, signs, bins, seating etc. should be positioned and designed so as to



reduce potential visual clutter. Details of carriageway and footway design should reflect the character of the Conservation Area and take into account the surrounding buildings and their functions and features. Developers will also be required to have regard to the Councils 'Paving Policy' in the design of footways and footpaths.

Natural materials traditional to the area should be used, where possible, and the colour and texture of new materials should reflect those of the rest of the Conservation Area. Both design and materials should assist those with disabilities. However, developments that seek to use a proliferation of different materials found in Conservation Areas do not work well and a simple application of local materials often achieves the best results. Should 'difficult to obtain' materials be used then the developer may be requested to provide for future replacement of small sections of these materials, following repairs undertaken by Utilities. This might take the form of additional ancillary hard landscaping, the materials from which could be relocated to the carriageway and footway as and when needed. The Highway Authority will be willing to consider alternative solutions.

### **5.3 Village Conservation Areas**

New development in village Conservation Areas should generally respect the predominant form of the particular village and a standardised approach to highway design and detailing is unlikely to be appropriate. As in section 5.2 the highway must be designed to reflect the character of the area.

A characteristic of many villages is the informal appearance of highway edges; grass verges or village greens without kerbs. In these areas standard pre-cast concrete kerbs may not be appropriate. New roads may be edged with informal stone kerbs where a vehicle deterrent is necessary.

For maintenance reasons the Highway Authority will only accept a grass verge between the footway and front boundary walls of new properties under an agreement. However, they will be accepted for new development in village Conservation Areas where it is the normal pattern and where other arrangements would appear incongruous.

### **5.4 Signs**

Careful attention should be given to the siting of signs as an integral part of the design of any development in Conservation Areas. Developers should ensure that they consult the Highway Authority at an early stage in the design



process to establish requirements, and should take account of the following guidelines and those contained in the Department for Transport's *'Traffic Signs Manual'*.

the minimum number and size of signs should be used consistent with road safety and traffic management needs;  
Support poles should be avoided wherever wall mounting can be achieved;  
Signs should be illuminated only where absolutely necessary; and  
Care must be taken when positioning signs close to existing trees.

The Civic Trust/English Heritage Towns Forum booklet *'Traffic Measures in Historic Towns – an introduction to good practice'* contains useful information and suggestions in this respect.

## 5.5 Road Lighting

The Highway Authority will relax normal standards applicable to road lighting where this will avoid a multiplicity of columns or where a high level of illumination would be detrimental to the character of the conservation area. Well designed columns or wall mounted lanterns should be used, appropriate to the particular character of the area, and cables, fuse and switch cabinets should be hidden or incorporated into the walls of buildings where possible. All trees are protected in a Conservation Area, therefore great care will be needed in the positioning of any lighting unit.

## 5.6 Parking

Wherever possible, opportunities for unobtrusive off-street parking should be considered where this is compatible with conservation aims, see section 11. In the design of car parking areas, care should be taken to harmonise their features with the character of the area. The visible materials of road construction should complement the character of the Conservation Areas.

## 5.7 Trees in the Highway

New buildings must not be built under, against or within the canopies of existing highway trees, as these can cause damage to the root system, prevent future pruning taking place, and be a source of nuisance to residents. See paragraphs 14.8 and 15.5 for further advice.