

A Guide to Living within a Conservation Area for Householders

This guide explains the practical implications of living in a domestic property within a conservation area. The guide covers all frequently asked questions but if you are in any doubt over whether works to your property require planning permission from Worcester City Council then you should contact the planning department.

This guide is not applicable to listed buildings or their curtilage as these have their own additional controls. In these cases you should contact the council prior to undertaking work on the property.

What is a conservation area?

A conservation area is defined as an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance (Section 69 of the 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act).

The main attributes that define the special character of an area are its physical appearance and history, e.g. the form and features of buildings and the spaces between them, their former uses and historical development. Where there are a number of periods of historical development, the character of individual parts of the conservation area may differ. Contrasts between the appearance of areas and the combination of buildings of various ages, materials and styles may contribute to its special character.

In some instances areas that either contribute little, or are even detrimental to the character of the conservation area, are included within the boundary because of their potential for enhancement. It is important that the council carefully balances the benefits of potential enhancement against the possibility that the inclusion of such areas may be perceived as devaluing the status of the conservation area as a whole.

The role of residents and the local authority in conservation

The success of a conservation area depends on the joint commitment of the local authorities and those living and working in the conservation area working to preserve and enhance its character.



Worcester City Council, as the local planning authority, has a statutory duty to regularly review if an area is appropriate for conservation area designation and to seek to preserve and enhance the special character of a conservation area. The Council seeks to achieve this by considering the effect that development has on the character of a conservation area, which is set out within conservation area appraisals. Conservation areas are also a focus for enhancement projects with additional funding opportunities available. Conservation area appraisals are used to identify potential enhancements, and where resources allow, the council seek to undertake or fund enhancement projects either in part or in whole.

Local residents living within conservation areas can help protect its character when considering carrying out repairs or alterations to their properties. Small incremental changes to properties such as the replacement of original windows or doors or the use of inappropriate building materials, can have a cumulative effect on the character and appearance of individual buildings and upon the area as a whole. Equally, poorly conceived new development or insensitive extensions to older properties can detract from the character of a conservation area.

Some change must occur in conservation areas to allow them to accommodate vital, thriving communities. It is important that conservation areas are able to respond to changing economic, social and cultural conditions without losing their special, often unique historic and architectural qualities. It is also important to recognize that designating an area as a conservation area is not a mechanism to fossilize an area but seeks to focus enhancements and to manage change in a way that preserves its special interest.

How will living in a conservation area affect me?

In summary conservation area status affects a property in the following ways:

- The **demolition** of buildings or boundaries may require consent.
- **Minor works** that would not normally need planning permission outside a conservation area may need planning permission in a conservation area.
- There are additional **controls over trees** in a conservation area.
- The conservation of the area is a consideration in **planning proposals**.



Demolition

Unlisted buildings, in groups or individually, can often contribute towards the character of a conservation area and the loss of these buildings can be detrimental. For this reason, planning permission is required for the substantial or total demolition of certain buildings or boundary features.

Application forms are available on the Council's website, the Planning Portal or by request. If you are replacing a building, involving the demolition of a structure and new development in its place, this will be covered by a single planning application as appropriate for the application. If you are proposing to demolish the structure but no replacement is proposed you should apply for conservation area consent.

In summary, within a conservation area permission is required to demolish:

- A building over 115 cubic metres in volume (roughly the size of a large garden shed); or
- A boundary wall or fence over 1m high where it fronts a highway, or 2m high to the front or side of a property.

If a building or boundary is felt to have a neutral or negative impact on the character of an area then it is likely that planning consent will be granted. If it does make a positive contribution however, and replacement is needed to maintain character, planning permission is unlikely to be granted until a suitable scheme for redevelopment is approved and a start date for construction is agreed.

Minor Works

Several development works can be undertaken to a property in a conservation area without submitting a planning application. The changes allowed are set out within [The Town and Country Planning \(General Permitted Development\)\(England\) Order 2015](#) as amended, in which conservation areas are classified as Article 2(3) areas. The effect of this on the most common changes to domestic properties is listed in the '[Summary of Minor Changes](#)' later in this document.

Some conservation areas within the city are covered by an Article 4 Direction, and therefore have additional permitted development rights withdrawn. These cases are set out on the 'Conservation Areas' page of the Worcester City Council website. Here additional planning controls apply which are set out in the accompanying design guide.

www.worcester.gov.uk

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The fact that an application may be required for works within an Article 4 Direction area or because a site is within a conservation area does not mean that permission will be refused. We will pay particular regard to the extent to which the proposals affect the character and appearance of the area. The Conservation Area Appraisals and Design Guides draw out the key features contributing to an area's special architectural or historic interest, which should serve as a useful guide.

In conservation areas owners of buildings are encouraged to repair and maintain their properties without loss or damage to their character or integrity. Repairs should be considered as the preferred option, with replacement only where it would enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area. Historically accurate solutions should be adopted, using appropriate design, materials and construction methods appropriate to the age and character of the building.

To best conserve the historic and visual value of conservation areas original windows and doors should be retained and repaired, rather than replaced. If repair is not possible then identical units (design, materials and finishes) should be made up. Original roof materials such as Welsh slate and clay roof tiles should be retained. Modern materials such as concrete tiles or artificial slates are harmful to the character of historical areas. Chimneys are often prominent and attractive features and their demolition or truncation is also likely to harm the area, as is the removal of walls, railings or gates where they form part of an attractive streetscape.

It is always advisable to discuss your proposals at an early stage prior to submission of an application through the Council's [Pre-application](#) and [Permitted Development Advice service](#). Officers will be able to give you an informal view of the possible outcome of an application and may also be able to help overcome any problems.

Applications must be submitted on the appropriate forms with scale plans, drawings and supporting information as required. You will also need to pay the appropriate application fee. Please see our [planning application forms and fees page](#) for the current fee and details of the supporting information required.

Before submitting a planning application you should also check the legal documents of the property to see if any planning restrictions apply from a decision on a previous application or from the sale/leasing of a property.

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The most common minor changes to a property are listed overleaf. This list is not exhaustive and non-domestic buildings, flats or listed buildings will have further restrictions.

If you have any questions about restrictions on permitted development please visit the [Planning](#) pages of our website or speak to a member of our Planning Team.

Article 4 Directions

Article 4 Directions withdraw certain permitted development rights, for example, rights to alter a front elevation or remove a boundary wall without planning permission. The directions are only put in place where it is considered important to retain original features in order to maintain the historic and architectural character of a Conservation Area. Property owners in areas affected by an Article 4 Direction need to apply for planning permission to undertake works set out in the Article 4 Direction. No fee needs be paid where an application for planning permission is required as a result of an Article 4 Direction. Those areas with Article 4 Directions will have further information listed with the relevant conservation area.

Control over trees

Within conservation areas trees are given special protection. Written applications for consent must be made to the council giving six weeks notice of intent to top, lop, or fell a tree over 75mm (3 inches) in diameter, measured at 1.5 metres above ground. This period of six weeks must be given for the council to either approve the application or to serve a Tree Preservation Order. For more information on tree work applications, please contact the Council's tree officer via planning@worcester.gov.uk.



Summary of Minor Changes

- ✓ **A PLANNING APPLICATION SHOULD BE SUBMITTED**
- ? **A PLANNING APPLICATION MAY NEED TO BE SUBMITTED**
- x **A PLANNING APPLICATION IS NOT REQUIRED**

Note: This list is not exhaustive

Repairs and Maintenance

- ? Repairs (If undertaken in a like for like manner)
- ? Maintenance

Extensions and Ancillary Buildings

Single storey rear extensions constructed in materials of similar appearance to those used on the existing house (Subject to scale restrictions)

- ? Front, side and two storey extensions
- ✓ Detached ancillary buildings or enclosures to the side or front of the dwelling house
- x The installation of an electric charging point

Walls

- ✓ Painting or cladding unless repairing or renewing an existing surface
- ✓ Satellite dishes or microwave antenna on an elevation fronting a highway, on a chimney, and on a building over 15 metres high
- ✓ Installing, altering or replacing a chimney, flue soil or vent pipe on a wall or roof on a principal or side elevation fronting a highway

Roofs

- ✓ Raising the ridge/expanding the size of the roof
- ✓ Installing a dormer window
- ? Renewing or replacing a roof covering
- ? Installing solar panels (Subject to certain conditions)
- ? Installing a roof light (Subject to certain conditions)

Boundaries

- ✓ Demolition of walls, fences, gates and railings, if over 1 metre fronting a highway, or over 2 metres elsewhere (requires conservation area consent)

Gardens

- ✓ Works to trees - in most cases (see overleaf)
- ✓ Surfacing and ground works (Depending on scale and form of operation)
- ? Garden ornaments/planting and maintenance (Deep digging in areas of archaeological importance may require notification)
- ✓ Swimming or other pool to the side or front of the dwelling house



Planning Proposals

A planning application should be submitted to the local planning authority where 'development' not covered by The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development)(England) Order 2015 takes place. This mostly applies to new buildings or extensions but also some alterations or a material change of use.

Where a planning application is required for development within conservation areas it should be accompanied by sufficient details to enable the impact of the proposed development on the character of the conservation area, to be assessed. This includes details of scale, massing, design and materials of buildings and their relationship to existing buildings and the impact on their setting. Applicants are required to describe the significance of all assets affected by development, proportionate to the proposal. This should be done through Statements of Heritage Significance or as part of a Design and Access Statement.

Good design is crucial to maintaining the character of a conservation area. The Council looks very carefully at the design of new development and has policies in its Local Plan which seek to carefully control changes in conservation areas. Applications within conservation areas may also be considered by the Conservation Advisory Panel, an independent body of members who will comment on the form of the proposals. Planning proposals are advertised on site and in the local press.

More Information

For more information for owners of properties in conservation areas, see the [Historic England website](#).