

Heritage Conservation Strategy

Planning for the Conservation of Chorley's Built Heritage

2008 – 2013

- 1. Contents**
- 2. Introduction**
- 3. Aims and Objectives**
- 4. Survey, Analysis and Designation**
- 5. Identifying and Implementing Initiatives and Projects**
- 6. Development Control and Enforcement**
- 7. Education and Promotion**
- 8. Monitoring and Review**
- 9. Action Plan 2008 – 2013**

1 Introduction

Chorley district contains a wealth of historic buildings of national, regional and local importance which are considered to have special architectural or historic interest. It currently has 475 listed buildings (buildings which are statutory listed for their architectural or historic interest), of which 30 have been identified as being of outstanding quality (grade I or II*) and all are protected from inappropriate alterations or demolition. The historic environment of the area also contains 10 Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs) and the Council has identified and designated 9 Conservation Areas which are architecturally attractive and/or which have a special historic character or appearance.

National Policy Guidance

The Council is one of the key players in managing Chorley's heritage and promoting the preservation and enhancement of the historic built environment. Government Planning Policy Guidance (PPG15) Planning and the Historic Environment requires local authorities to maintain and strengthen their commitment to the stewardship of the historic environment and to reflect this in their development plan policies and their allocation of resources.

Good conservation practice is crucial to the long-term well being of Chorley's built heritage. It is also significant to the economic well being of the area and can act as a catalyst for regeneration.

Bringing together conservation issues, setting out the Council's aims and objectives with regard to conservation and establishing clear procedures including an action plan for achieving them will enable a structured and co-ordinated approach to be taken to conserving and enhancing the historic environment. This is in line with the Council's Strategic objectives of; developing the character and feel of Chorley as a good place to live, and putting Chorley at the heart of regional economic development in the Central Lancashire sub-region.

2 Aim and Objectives

The aim is to preserve and enhance the Council's listed and other historic buildings, conservation areas and other elements of its historic environment including ancient monuments, and registered parks and gardens.

This will be achieved through:

- The survey, analysis and designation of conservation areas
- The implementation of local plan and local development framework policies and proposals and supplementary planning documents by the use of development control powers and enforcement;
- The identification of appropriate action/initiatives and the securing of funding for their implementation;
- Working in partnership with other relevant statutory, private and voluntary bodies.

The objectives are:

To develop an information base on the condition and character of Chorley's nine conservation areas, listed and other historic buildings.

To identify and secure funding for initiatives to achieve the aim of the strategy.

To protect the built heritage from damaging change by the use of planning enforcement powers through the local plan and local development framework and the development control process

To promote good conservation practice by providing specialist conservation advice and to raise awareness and understanding of the built heritage.

3 Survey, Analysis and Designation

This will involve recording and understanding the history and fabric of Chorley's built heritage. The field work and subsequent recording and presentation of information will be carried out in house by the Conservation Officer and the Regeneration and Urban Design Manager in consultation with owners/occupiers, Parish Councillors, Local historians and local amenity and civic groups. This exercise will initially concentrate on the existing conservation areas and listed buildings in Chorley .

The information recorded will be used in future local development framework reviews for the formulation of effective policies for the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment.

Conservation Areas

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'. The Council will continue to investigate both the designation of new Conservation Areas and to review the boundaries to existing areas.

Conservation areas are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Section 71 of the same Act requires local planning authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these conservation areas.

Additional government guidance regarding the management of historic buildings and conservation areas is set out within Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment (PPG15 - 1994).

At regional level there are a number of other documents that make reference to the importance to protecting conservation areas:

- North West of England Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021
- North West Best Practice Design Guide

The appraisals will seek to

- Define the special interest of the conservation areas and identify the issues which threaten the special qualities of the conservation area (in the form of Part 1: Character Appraisal);
- Provide guidelines to prevent harm and achieve enhancement (in the form of the Part 2: Management Proposals).

The appraisals will provide a firm basis on which applications for development within Chorley can be assessed. They will be read in conjunction with the wider development plan policy framework produced by Chorley Council. That framework is set out in a number of documents, including:

- Chorley Local Plan Review 2003:
 - Policy HT7 (Conservation Areas)
 - Policy HT10 (Locally Important Buildings)
- Chorley's emerging Local Development Framework Development Plan Documents:
 - Core Strategy
 - Development Control Policies
 - Central Action Area Plan
 - Allocations and Designations

- Shopfronts – Design Guidelines
- Householder design Guidance (Supplementary Planning Document)

Signage and Advertising

The council will continue to ensure that signage and advertising is appropriate to the character of the listed building and/or conservation area.

Trees in conservation areas.

Trees are very important landscape features in Conservation Areas and contribute greatly to providing an attractive setting to historic areas. Their loss, or indeed inappropriate works, to them can have a marked and detrimental effect on the character and appearance of Conservation Areas. Contribution trees make assessed as part of Conservation Area Appraisal. Council trees officer to advise where necessary.

4 Identifying and Implementing Initiatives and Projects

Once the built heritage has been recorded, its significance, in terms of its historic importance and architectural merit, can be assessed. The qualities of the area can be highlighted for protection and problems affecting the character and appearance of individual buildings and groups of buildings will be identified with a view to improving the area in general.

Proposals and initiatives for conservation and enhancement will generally fall into the following categories:

The promotion of Article 4 Directions to control permitted development which could lead to the deterioration of the character and appearance of the conservation area;

Urgent repairs to key buildings in the conservation area;

Townscape enhancement schemes and general improvements such as the reinstatement of original features or structural repairs;

Public realm enhancement works;

Shopfront and signage improvement schemes.

Urgent repairs to listed buildings and locally listed buildings within and outside the conservation areas will also be identified.

Bids to secure funding for the identified works and projects will be developed and submitted. Potential sources of funding are; English Heritage and The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). (Note: At present The HLF are unlikely to be interested given the current levels of deprivation within Chorley. However, the criteria for awarding grants may alter post 2012 Olympics).

Listed Buildings

Listed buildings are a finite historic resource which are an important part of the cultural heritage and our local and national identity. The buildings contribute to the quality of our local environment and are an important part of the character and appearance of our surroundings. The Council therefore recognises the importance of protecting buildings which have special architectural or historic value and the general presumption in favour of their preservation from demolition or any inappropriate alterations.

It is important that listed buildings are regularly maintained and kept in a good state of repair. Whilst the Council recognises that on the whole this is the responsibility of the owner or occupier, the Council's conservation Officer can provide technical advice on the appropriateness of repairs and give guidance on the choice of materials and methodology used. The Council will also consider, in special circumstances and subject to budget constraints, grants to assist in the sensitive repair of historic buildings.

Proposals for altering Listed Buildings need to show clearly why the works, which affect its character and special interest, are desirable or indeed necessary. They should include an assessment of the likely impact of the proposals on the building and its setting. The Council will always take into account the following issues when considering applications to alter or demolish a Listed Building:

- The historic and architectural importance of the building
- The particular physical features of the building which make it of historic value
- The building's setting and its contribution to the local scene
- Whether the proposed works would bring substantial benefit to the community and in particular the regeneration of the area or the enhancement of the environment.

Demolition of listed buildings.

Listed buildings are a finite resource which cannot be replaced and their loss through demolition would be detrimental to the historic character and appearance of Chorley and the surrounding villages and countryside.

Proposals for the demolition of a Listed Building will not be considered unless there are convincing reasons that all efforts have been tried and failed to secure the existing use of the building or find viable new uses.

Matters to be considered will be

- The consideration of the building, the cost of repairing and maintaining it in relation to its importance and the value derived from its continued use

- The adequacy of efforts made to retain the building in use and/or find other alternative uses.
- The merits of alternative proposals for the site.

Encouragement will be given to ensure that all Listed Buildings are kept in good state of repair and to seek solutions where a building is in a poor condition. The Council will consider the use of its powers to serve either repair or urgent repair notices under Section 48 and 54 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act on any owners/occupiers who neglect the upkeep of listed buildings.

Buildings At Risk

Buildings at risk which are identified through the survey work, the development control process or otherwise brought to the attention of the Council will be entered in the register of buildings at risk. The list will be reviewed on a regular basis and the condition of the buildings will be monitored.

Any opportunity to help secure the future of a building at risk will be taken through the development control process or through the identification of, and application to, appropriate funding schemes.

Locally Listed Buildings

Some local vernacular buildings are valued for their contribution to the character of the local area because of their historic and/or architectural value but fall outside the formal designations of a conservation area or fail to merit individual listing. Such buildings will be identified in the survey of the Council's built heritage and consideration will be adding them to its Local List to afford them better protection from demolition or inappropriate alterations.

Archaeology and Scheduled Ancient Monuments

Government advice on archaeology, is set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology (PPG16 - 1990). Guidance is provided on the circumstances in which archaeological remains should be preserved or recorded, the consultations that should be made as part of the planning process and the use of planning conditions if permission is granted.

Archaeology is concerned with the development of the whole landscape, not merely isolated sites within it. The need to conserve historic landscapes is inseparable from the need to protect the environment in general. Landscape includes a whole range of features which survive from the past, such as field patterns, transport routes, historic buildings, or the remains of former industries.

Landscape heritage strategy

LCC Archaeology Service undertook a landscape characterisation project for the whole county in 2002, available at <http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/environment/archaeologyandheritage/lhlcpcover/index.asp>

Scheduled Ancient Monuments

The Government compiles a “schedule” of monuments of national importance which are protected even more comprehensively than listed buildings. Scheduling is an extremely selective process, even more so than the listing of buildings, and each scheduled monument can be considered as equivalent to a Grade I or II* (ie. Outstanding) listed building. There are currently 10 scheduled monuments in Chorley.

The care and maintenance of scheduled monuments lies with owners but, unlike listed buildings, statutory control and intervention lies with central government. The Council’s statutory role is therefore restricted to the control of development which may affect scheduled monuments.

The majority of known archaeological sites and monuments are recorded on the Lancashire County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). The council will ensure archaeological matters are properly considered when dealing with planning applications.

The Council will encourage and support, wherever possible, archaeological, historical and residents groups in understanding the cultural and physical development of Chorley. Locally known historical sites and monuments should be recorded for each parish and town alongside local historic buildings. (Lancashire County Council (LCC) Archaeology Service holds and maintains the Historic Environment Record (HER) for all known sites of archaeological interest within the county).

Parish plans

The Regeneration and Urban Design section will continue to develop/support external community initiatives to achieve high quality design eg parish plans and village design statements.

Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest

The landscapes we see today are the result of thousands of years of human activity, but in some places the land has been deliberately adapted and landscaped to form places of leisure and pleasure. These parks and gardens range from the small suburban leisure and pleasure grounds, to the formal parklands and surrounding grand houses. English Heritage has compiled a Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest, similar to the lists of historic buildings. There are 4 sites in Chorley on the register; Lever Park, Rivington Gardens, the grounds associated with Astley Hall and those at Hoghton Tower. Designation does not confer any additional controls but it is a material consideration when considering proposals for development. This emphasises their historic value and encourages those who have a role in management and protection to treat them with special care.

In consideration of the staff resources available, the above work will be done on a phased basis (see appendix 1). It is proposed that the action programme be reviewed and rolled forward annually.

6 Development Control and Enforcement

Detailed local plan conservation policies are implemented under development control powers in the determination of applications for planning permission and listed building consent. Under the new Local Development Framework there is considerable scope for developing the Council's policies with regard to conserving the historic environment.

The Council is the key heritage advisor giving specialist advice on conservation matters to developers and owners/occupiers of historic buildings. The Council's Conservation Officer is based within the Regeneration and Urban Design Section and provides specialist knowledge and advice in both pre-application negotiations and in the processing applications for listed building consent and planning permission for development to listed buildings and development within conservation areas.

7 Education and Promotion

Specialist advice to owners and occupiers on alterations, extensions, repairs and other works to listed buildings and buildings in conservation areas is currently provided by the Council's Conservation Officer. This service will continue and will be enhanced by increasing the availability of written guidance aimed at promoting good conservation practice and encouraging owner responsibility/stewardship.

Ordinary repairs to listed buildings on a like for like basis do not need permission from the Council, however, such buildings can be badly affected by unsympathetic alterations and anyone proposing such works is encouraged to contact the Conservation Officer.

8 Monitoring and Review

Monitoring of the impacts of this Strategy will be undertaken to better understand how well the process and outputs envisaged are being implemented, and whether there are any unforeseen effects.

The Strategy encompasses local indicators relating to Conservation Area Appraisals as contained in the Business Departments Business Plan.

The Regeneration and Urban Design Section has been working on elements that appear in this Strategy since January 2008. St Georges Conservation Area Review was completed April 2008 and St Laurences and Rivington Conservation Area Reviews are currently under way, with a completion date for March 2009.

The Listed Building and Locally Listed Building records have been updated and posted on the Council's website and will continue to be reviewed.

The potential for grant aid in respect of Chorley's Heritage is currently being investigated.