



Design Guide 6

Conservation Areas (CAs)

6.1 CONSERVATION AREAS (CAs)

Conservation Areas (CAs) are defined in the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* as: *places of special architectural or historic interest, which have a particular character or appearance worthy of preservation or enhancement.* Groups of Listed and non-designated buildings, walls, trees and hedges, open spaces, views and historic settlement patterns all combine to create an individual sense of place. It is this character, rather than the individual buildings, that Conservation Area status seeks to protect.



Fig. 1 Chipping Norton Conservation Area

The first Conservation Areas in the District were identified in the late 1960s, since when there has been a rolling programme of designation and review. To date, some 50 Conservation Areas have been designated in West Oxfordshire, ranging in size from small settlements such as Asthall and Radcot, up to large market towns such as Witney and Chipping Norton.

CONSERVATION AREAS IN WEST OXFORDSHIRE

Conservation Area	Designated
1. Alvescot	1988
2. Asthall	1993
3. Aston	1999
4. Bampton	1976
5. Bartons	1993
6. Bladon	1990
7. Burford	1970
8. Cassington	1992
9. Charlbury	1974
10. Chastleton	1995
11. Chipping Norton	1970
12. Church Hanborough	1990
13. Churchill	1999
14. Combe	1989
15. Cornwell	1994
16. Ducklington	1988
17. Eynsham	1975
18. Fawler	1991
19. Filkins	1986
20. Finstock	1991
21. Great Rollright	1990
22. Great Tew	1978
23. Hailey	1992
24. Hardwick	1989
25. Idbury	1991
26. Kelmscott	1995
27. Kencot	1994
28. Kingham	1986
29. Langford	1993
30. Leafield	1990
31. Little Tew	2007
32. Millwood End (Hanborough)	2004
33. Minster Lovell	1990
34. Northmoor	1992
35. Over Norton	1992
36. Radcot	1995
37. Ramsden	1991
38. Sandford St Martin	1991
39. Shilton	1985
40. Shipton-under-Wychwood	1989
41. Spelsbury, Taston & Dean	1991
42. Stanton Harcourt & Sutton	1989
43. Stonesfield	1988
44. Swerford	1988
45. Swinbrook	1990
46. Tackley	1994
47. Taynton	1970
48. Witney & Cogges	1975
49. Woodstock	1975
50. Wootton	1976

settlements in bold have up-to-date CA Appraisals

For further information, see: <http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-building-links/historic-buildings-conservation-areas-page/conservation-areas/>

6.2 CONSERVATION AREA STATUS

Conservation Area status does not mean that no further change or development will be permitted in that area; rather it is intended to ensure that any potential changes will be managed in a way that preserves or enhances the special qualities of the Conservation Area. An accumulation of poorly judged additions or losses of traditional features, each apparently minor in its own right, can cause significant harm to the character of a Conservation Area as a whole.



Fig. 2 Burford Conservation Area

In Conservation Areas, the preservation and enhancement of the area is a consideration in all planning decisions. Proposals likely to cause harm to a Conservation Area or its setting are unlikely to be supported.

Planning applications for development within Conservation Areas, including for new buildings and alterations to existing buildings, should

demonstrate how the proposals would preserve or enhance the character of the area. Special attention should be given to design, scale and massing, and use of materials, so that the existing character of the area is not harmed.

Conservation Area status brings with it some restrictions to the Permitted Development (PD) Rights enjoyed by homeowners and businesses (the rights to carry out development without planning permission). Examples of forms of development that *may* require Planning Permission within a Conservation Area, but that *may not* require Planning Permission outside a Conservation Area, include: some extensions; some alterations to roofs, windows and doors; some types of cladding; and some elements protruding from walls or roof slopes (including satellite dishes, antennae, chimneys and flues)

NB this is not a comprehensive list, and for the avoidance of doubt you should contact the Planning Department.

In 2013, the previous statutory requirement for Conservation Area Consent for the demolition of structures within Conservation Areas was superseded by a requirement for Planning Permission. A building in a Conservation Area may not be demolished without the consent of the Local Planning Authority. The requirement for Planning Permission in such cases is quite separate from any related consents required (for example, for the construction of a replacement structure).

If a replacement structure is proposed – and particularly where the structure it is proposed to demolish has merit – the relative merits of the proposed replacement will be set against those of the existing structure. In such cases, applications for Planning Permission for demolition should not be made in isolation.

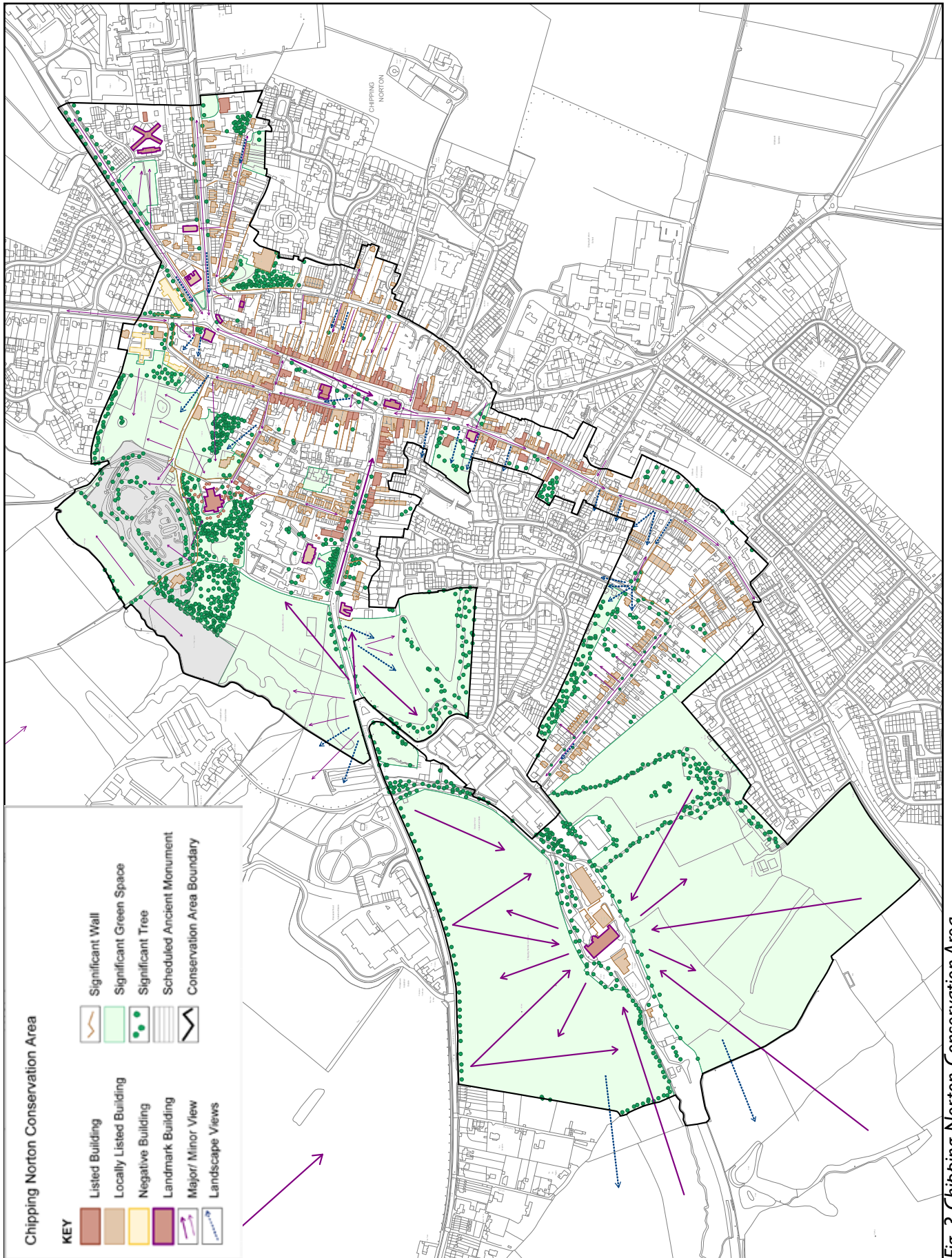


Fig. 3 Chipping Norton Conservation Area

The requirement for Planning Permission for the demolition of structures within Conservation Areas does not apply to: a) Listed Buildings, b) buildings subject to the ecclesiastical exemption (such as churches), or c) Scheduled Monuments. In the case of a proposal to demolish a Listed Building, whether within or outside a Conservation Area, an application for Listed Building Consent would be needed. In such cases, Historic England would act as a statutory consultee. In general, it is extremely unusual for Listed Building Consent to be granted for the demolition of a Listed structure.

See also: Design Guide 7: Listed Buildings, Registered Parks and Scheduled Monuments; Design Guide 11: New Development and Context.



Fig. 4 Tackley CA: consistent use of local limestone

6.3 DEVELOPMENT ADVICE

The historical settlements of West Oxfordshire owe much of their distinctiveness and charm to the consistent use of local materials (most notably oolitic limestone) and the unfolding pattern of historical building styles. Settlements appear to have grown organically, creating a visual context

into which new development must be sensitively inserted if it is not to damage their established appearance and character.

Today, a wide range of architectural forms and man-made materials is available. When juxtaposed with traditional forms and natural materials these are often inappropriate. Unless special care is taken in both the design and choice of materials for new buildings, the character of historical settlements will be progressively eroded and may ultimately be lost to future generations.

Extensions to existing houses and the conversion of appropriate structurally sound buildings, which are worthy of retention or make a positive contribution to the local scene, may be permitted in some circumstances. The conversion of redundant historical buildings should respect the original character of the building and its setting. Historical or architectural features of merit should be protected and retained. Large extensions, or an accumulation of extensions, can easily obscure the simple form of traditional buildings and should be avoided. Some buildings with a particular visual or historical character may be harmed by new development, however well designed. In these cases development may not be permitted.

New buildings and extensions should be well designed in themselves, and in sympathy with the character of the area. They should respect the form, siting, scale and massing of the surrounding buildings. New development should incorporate existing features of importance, such as trees, hedgerows, ponds, stone walls, paths and tracks. Views within, into and out of Conservation Areas are also protected, and should be carefully assessed, with new development designed to ensure that these are not harmed.

See also: Design Guide 14: Extensions & Alterations; Design Guide 15: Conversion of Agricultural Buildings.



Fig. 5 Chipping Norton CA - key view of Bliss Mill

6.4 TREES

Owners of trees in Conservation Areas must give the Council six week's notice of their intention to carry out any of the following works: lopping, topping or felling. This applies to trees with trunks more than 75mm in diameter, but not to fruit trees or saplings.



Fig. 6 Prominent tree in Tackley CA

Trees and hedgerows which make a contribution to a Conservation Area should not normally be removed unless dead, dying or dangerous. Where removal is necessary, suitable replacements should be planted in consultation with the Forestry and Landscape Officer.

6.5 BOUNDARY TREATMENTS

Boundary treatments, both natural and man made, are a critically important element of historical settlements, and often play a defining role within Conservation Areas. In West Oxfordshire, dry stone walling is especially characteristic, knitting together settlements and giving definition to roads, fields and properties. In general, traditional stone walling should be retained and restored in Conservation Areas, and will often represent an appropriate choice where new boundary treatments are required.

Particularly vulnerable to change is the burgage walling found in a number of the District's towns: most notably Burford, Chipping Norton, Woodstock and Witney. Burgage plots are long, thin housing plots trailing back from the street and dating back as far as the C13. While the walling may be recent, it will often respect the original burgage plot lines, thus providing an invaluable physical record of the town's historical topography. Such walls are rarely Listed (though may be curtilage Listed), and are thus susceptible to incremental change and loss over time. In general, burgage plot lines and walls should be preserved, and loss of burgage walling avoided.

Traditional native hedgrow species, such as hawthorn and field maple, also form key local boundary features in the District. In general, these should be retained where present, and such species used in preference to non-native ornamental species when new hedgerows are required.

6.6 SETTING

As the NPPF makes clear (*NPPF 2012 paragraph 128 etc.*) setting is a fundamental aspect of heritage assets. In the case of Conservation Areas, where change is proposed (including beyond the boundary of the Conservation Area), careful consideration should be given to the likely impact of that change on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and its setting.

'Setting' is defined in the NPPF as: *The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral. (Annex 2, Glossary, NPPF, 2012).*

'Setting' is defined by Historic England as: *The surroundings in which a place is experienced, its local context, embracing present and past relationships to the adjacent landscape. (Conservation Principles, English Heritage, 2008).*

6.7 CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISALS

Conservation Area Character Appraisals are concise, illustrated documents describing the main features of a Conservation Area, which contribute to its special interest and quality. Each document has sections describing the location and setting of the Conservation Area, its historical development, settlement pattern, architectural character, boundary treatments, landscape context and views; and includes gazetteers of both Listed and Locally Listed Buildings, together with a map detailing the salient features. Conservation Area Appraisals are accompanied by management proposals for the future maintenance and improvement of the Conservation Area.

Conservation Area documents are intended to support, and provide an evidence base for, the designation of each Conservation Area; to complement national and local planning policy; and to provide a source of information for local residents, planners and developers.

For further information see: <http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-building-links/historic-buildings-conservation-areas-page/conservation-areas/>

<https://content.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/gpa3-setting-of-heritage-assets/gpa3.pdf/> (Historic England Guidance)