

## **BUILDING CONSERVATION AND ARCHAEOLOGY**

### **Introduction**

The Local Planning Authority has a duty to ensure that the best of the existing features in the townscape or landscape are protected against removal or alteration.

The older parts of the towns and villages in the district are of particular townscape value and in the past have been vulnerable to change brought about by poor quality replacement buildings or new development. It is essential, therefore, that historic and architecturally important parts of settlements within the district are protected from change leading to a deterioration in their aesthetic qualities. Conservation Areas have been designated in recognition of those areas where special controls are necessary.

The district also accommodates a great many individual buildings that have been listed by the Secretary of State as being of particular architectural or historic interest, together with a number of Scheduled Ancient Monuments and other sites of archaeological importance. This Plan contains policies to afford suitable protection to these buildings, monuments and sites.

### **Objectives**

- To protect and enhance the historic character of settlements, particularly within the conservation areas and to ensure the retention of all listed buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments.
- To formulate and publish a detailed assessment of each conservation area, indicating townscape features, buildings and spaces that distinguish the character of each conservation area, to be taken into consideration as supplementary planning guidance when new development is being proposed.
- To encourage a high standard of design for new buildings and development and to secure improvements to the environment generally.
- To encourage the use of materials that reinforce the local character of the area

### **Conservation Areas**

At present there are ten Conservation Areas within the plan area, as shown in [maps produced as SPG]

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Any development that is permitted within, or adjacent to, a conservation area will have to satisfy detailed design criteria [as set out in Policy BC1, below, and elaborated upon in the accompanying Supplementary Guidance] to ensure that it will be of a form, scale and character compatible with the surrounding buildings and the overall appearance of the conservation area.

To allow proper consideration of the design and external appearance of proposals, applications submitted in outline form will not be accepted.

**POLICY BC1 - CONSERVATION AREAS: GENERAL**

**The Local Planning Authority will seek to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of conservation areas, including the buildings, open spaces, trees, views and other aspects of the environment that contribute to the character of such areas.**

**Applications for new buildings, extensions and alterations within, or adjacent to, conservation areas, will be permitted provided that the following design criteria are met:-**

- (i) the design and siting of the proposal respects the townscape character, and the proposal logically forms a part of the larger composition of the area in which it is situated;**
- (ii) the mass of the proposal is in scale and harmony with adjoining buildings and the area as a whole, and the volumes making up its block form are proportioned such that they form a satisfactory composition with each other and with adjoining buildings;**
- (iii) the proposal uses appropriate architectural detailing to reinforce the character of the conservation area within which it is sited. Architectural details in the existing building are retained and faithfully replicated in the new development;**
- (iv) the external materials are appropriate to the particular building and to the character of the area; and,**
- (v) in the case of shopfronts, the proposal exhibits a high standard of shopfront design, reflecting the traditional character of the particular conservation area.**

**Guidance to be used for the assessment of proposals against the above criteria is to be found in [SPG.....]**

Applications relating to the provision of advertisements or street furniture in conservation areas, should be considered against Policies SAT9-SAT12 (inc). Applications relating to the provision of satellite dishes should be considered against Policy [insert number].

### **Demolition within Conservation Areas**

The local planning authority has control over the demolition of most buildings (including walls and structures) within conservation areas by virtue of Section 74 of the Listed Building and Conservation Areas Act.

The prime consideration when assessing such applications will be the desirability of preserving or enhancing the appearance of the area. Account will be taken of the contribution made by the building to the architectural and / or historical interest of the area, and the wider implications of the building's demolition on its surroundings and on the conservation area as a whole.

Consent for the demolition of any building will not be granted unless there are acceptable plans for the future use of the site. In cases where redevelopment of the site is proposed, consent for the demolition will not be granted until full planning permission has been approval for the redevelopment scheme.

### **POLICY BC2 - DEMOLITION WITHIN CONSERVATION AREAS**

**Consent for the demolition of a building in a conservation area will only granted in cases where all of the following criteria are met:**

- (i) (a) the building to be demolished is of no architectural or historical interest and makes no positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area; or,**
- (b) sufficient evidence has been provided to demonstrate that the building is beyond reasonable repair, having regard to its structural condition, the cost of repairing and maintaining it in relation to its importance, and to the value derived from its continued use; and that every effort has been made to find compatible alternative uses for the building and to sell it on the open market at a price reflecting its structural condition.**
- (ii) detailed plans for the after-use of the site have been submitted to, and approved by, the Local Planning Authority. (In cases where the after-use of the site includes development requiring planning permission, such permission must have been applied for and granted in order that the terms of this criterion be met).**

### **Listed Buildings**

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Buildings of architectural or historic interest make an important contribution to the character of the district and are of intrinsic value as individual buildings in their own right. Such buildings must be protected from demolition or from alterations that would adversely affect their character, architectural or historical integrity or setting.

The best use for an historic building is the use for which it was originally intended and, wherever possible, this original use should continue in order to ensure the retention of the unique character of the building. Where this is clearly not possible for reasons of economic viability, or because of the scale or location of the building, alternative uses may be acceptable provided any alterations or extensions required to facilitate the re-use comply with Policy BC3, below, and that the use itself is compatible with its environment.

The demolition of a listed building will not be permitted, until all other options have been fully explored.

**POLICY BC3 - ALTERATIONS TO LISTED BUILDINGS**

Alterations and additions to a listed building will not be permitted if they adversely affect important architectural or historic features, either internal or external, which contribute to its character, to the scale and proportions of the building or to the preservation of its setting. The choice of materials for new additions to listed buildings will be expected to complement the original materials of construction.

**POLICY BC4 - DEMOLITION OF LISTED BUILDINGS**

Consent for the demolition of a listed building will only be granted in wholly exceptional cases, where all of the following criteria are met:

- (i) the building is structurally unsound, and its demolition is required for reasons of safety; and / or
- (ii) all reasonable efforts have been made:-
  - (a) to maintain the existing use of the building;
  - (b) to find compatible alternative uses for the building;
  - (c) to sell the building on the open market at a realistic price reflecting the building's condition; and,
  - (d) to seek preservation of the building through charitable or community ownership, but that all of these efforts have failed; and,
- (iii) that demolition and subsequent redevelopment of the site would produce substantial benefits for the community which would decisively outweigh the loss arising from demolition; and,
- (iv) in the case of a listed building situated within a conservation area, detailed plans for the after-use of the site have been submitted to, and approved by, the Local Planning Authority. (In cases where the after-use of the site includes development requiring planning permission, such permission

**must have been applied for and granted in order that the terms of this criterion be met).**

### **Archaeology**

Archaeological remains are a finite and fragile resource. The remains contain information about our past, are part of our national identity and are valuable for their own sake and for their role in education, leisure and tourism. As a result it is important to ensure that archaeological remains are not needlessly or thoughtlessly destroyed.

More than 200 sites of archaeological interest including four Scheduled Ancient Monuments are recorded on the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) for the Rochford district. [MAP] It is undoubtedly the case that many other sites remain to be discovered and recorded, both within the historic cores of Rochford and Rayleigh and elsewhere across the District.

Prospective developers are advised to undertake an initial assessment of whether a site is known or likely to contain archaeological remains as part of their initial research into its development potential. The local planning authority will expect any proposal that would affect a known site of archaeological importance to be accompanied by sufficient information to assess the level of disturbance posed by the development. Developers are urged to discuss their proposals with the local planning authority prior to submitting planning applications to agree the level of information to be provided.

### **POLICY BC5 - DEVELOPMENT AFFECTING ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES**

**Applications for development that would affect sites of known archaeological importance must be accompanied by sufficient information (this will consist of an archaeological field evaluation, unless advised otherwise by the local planning authority) to allow the local planning authority to assess the importance of the site, the likely impact of the development proposal and, on the basis of these findings, to determine the appropriate course of action.**

Where nationally important sites, whether scheduled or not, are affected by proposed development there will be a presumption in favour of their physical preservation *in situ* and against proposals which would involve significant alteration or damage to them, or which would have a significant effect on their setting. The weight given to preserving archaeological remains of lesser importance will be assessed against other relevant factors, including the need for the proposed development.

The best means of preserving archaeological remains is to leave them undisturbed. Excavation necessarily involves the destruction of a site with an accompanied loss of evidence. Where preservation *in situ* is not justified and where planning permission is sought for a development that will affect the integrity of an archaeological site, conditions

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will be imposed to ensure that a programme of archaeological investigations and recording takes place prior to the commencement of the development. Such conditions will be imposed as a matter of course in respect of proposals granted within areas of known archaeological importance, e.g. for all development permitted within the historic cores of Rochford and Rayleigh.

**POLICY BC6 - DEVELOPMENT AFFECTING SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENTS  
AND OTHER NATIONALLY IMPORTANT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES**

**Development that would damage a Scheduled Ancient Monument or other nationally important archaeological site, its character or its setting, will not be permitted.**

**POLICY BC7 - DEVELOPMENT AFFECTING REGIONAL, COUNTY AND LOCAL  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES**

**In cases where archaeological sites and monuments of regional, county or local importance, and / or their settings, will be affected by a proposed development, they should be preserved *in situ* if at all possible, and conditions will be imposed on any permission granted to this end. In cases where preservation *in situ* is not possible or merited, conditions will be imposed to ensure that a programme of archaeological investigations and recording takes place prior to the commencement of the development.**