

Conservation Areas in Leeds: A GUIDE

What is a conservation area?

A conservation area is '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 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

A conservation area will typically have a concentration of historic buildings, but the area's character and interest come from more than just buildings alone. The historic layout of property boundaries and roads, the spaces between buildings, mix of uses, characteristic materials, boundary treatments, shop fronts, views, trees and green spaces, street furniture, colours and textures all contribute to the special character of areas. Conservation areas protect the whole area not just buildings.



Commercial character, Briggate, city centre

Why designate conservation areas?

The City Council designates conservation areas to recognise, protect and celebrate areas of special character. Conservation areas are not there to stop development but to manage change.

There are currently 65 designated areas in Leeds with a diversity of special character. They include parts of Leeds city centre, medieval market towns, industrial manufacturing and mining settlements that boomed during the industrial revolution and small rural villages.



Industrial character along the River Aire

What does designation mean?

Designation does not stop change. The evolution of places is what creates the historic environment and it is important to provide a contribution from our own time. Designation is a way of making sure that any future change respects and adds to the special character of the area.

The Council has a duty to pay special attention to preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of conservation areas when considering planning applications. This includes developments that affect the setting of conservation areas.

Does demolition require consent?

You will need conservation area consent to demolish a building and certain other structures, such as some boundary walls. Generally, we are in favour of keeping all buildings that make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of conservation areas.

It is an offence to demolish a building without first getting consent.



Rural character, Thorner conservation area



How are planning applications dealt with?

You will need to demonstrate that any development proposal preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the conservation area. The council can exercise greater control over building work in conservation areas, including materials and detailed design. This does not mean that all new buildings have to be exact replicas of past styles. The Council welcomes innovation and imagination in design - so long as the proposal is in character with and, ideally, enhances the conservation area. To be successful new development should be of its time and inspired by, and respectful of its place.

You may need to apply for planning permission for alterations or extensions that would not normally need planning permission, such as extensions of 50 cubic metres, minor roof alterations, dormer windows, cladding, large garden structures and satellite dishes and radio masts.

Other work such as altering doors or windows in residential buildings is not affected by conservation area status unless the Council has applied extra restrictions known as Article 4 Directions. However, it is important that owners and occupiers are aware that the use of inappropriate materials, poor standards of design and erosion of architectural detail will negatively affect the character of the area as a whole, as well as potentially affecting the value of individual properties.

If you are in any doubt about whether you need planning permission please contact the Council's Development Enquiry Centre on 0113 222 4409 or by email planning@leeds.gov.uk

What's the position with regard to advertisements and signs?

There is also greater control over advertisements and signs in terms of their size and type. Commercial buildings have very limited permitted development rights and planning permission is required for any material alterations such as shop fronts, blinds, security shutters, removal of architectural features and replacement of doors and windows unless in an identical material, design and finish.

Are trees protected?

You must give the council six weeks notice, in writing, before any work is carried out to prune or fell a tree. A form is available for this online at www.leeds.gov.uk/ and can be obtained from the Development Enquiry Centre on 0113 222 4409.

Where can I find out more about conservation areas?

The council has a duty to clearly define why an area has been designated as a conservation area, outline its special interest and formulate and publish proposals for its preservation and enhancement. The council is undertaking a programme of conservation area appraisals that fulfil these requirements. The appraisals define the character and special interest of the conservation areas and identify opportunities for protection and enhancement. All the current appraisals are available on the website - www.leeds.gov.uk/conservation. The Council's policies for conservation areas are contained in its revised Unitary Development Plan.

The legislation relating to conservation areas is contained within the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the effects of which are explained in Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment (PPG15), published in September 1994.