

Conservation Areas: Frequently Asked Questions

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How are conservation areas chosen?

It is the job of the City Council as local planning authority to decide which parts of the district are worthy of protection as conservation areas and to designate these after public consultation. There are 63 at present in Leeds. The Council has no plans at present to designate further areas but it has begun to review the boundaries of existing conservation areas as part of an appraisal process.

How does a conservation area affect my property?

For land and buildings in conservation areas planning controls are stronger than elsewhere. The details are complex but are summarised below. Further advice is available from the Council's Planning Enquiry Centre on 0113 247 8000.

- **Demolition Control:** a special permission, conservation area consent, is needed for most demolition (defined by the courts as the removal of all or almost all of a structure). The exceptions are for listed buildings (which are already controlled), buildings under 115 cubic metres and for gates, walls and fences less than 1 metre high fronting a highway or 2 metres high elsewhere. Where the building or structure to be demolished makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area then the Council is unlikely to give permission for its demolition.
- **Permitted Development:** Minor building work is often possible without applying for planning permission. The limits of this "permitted development" are lower inside conservation areas in order to protect the character and appearance of the area. For example, the usual permitted development limit on extensions to houses of 70 cu metres is lowered to 50 cu metres. Rear dormers, cladding, large garden structures and satellite dishes on building frontages are all subject to special controls. Other work such as altering doors and windows or roof coverings is not affected by conservation area status unless the Council has applied extra restrictions known as Article 4 Directions. No such directions are currently in force in any conservation area in Leeds.
- **New Development and Alterations and Extensions:** where work needs planning permission this must be of a high standard appropriate to its surroundings. The law requires the Council to consider whether proposed development "preserves or enhances" the special character of the conservation area. For this reason outline planning applications may not be acceptable unless accompanied by at least some supporting sketches. It is Council policy in the UDP to ask for the use of traditional materials for buildings in conservation areas. This does not mean

however that new imaginative design will be resisted. It is important that each generation contributes something of its time to each area. To be successful this new design must acknowledge its special context.

- Works to Trees: trees are an essential part of the character of most conservation areas. The most important may be specifically protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) but conservation area designation gives some control over most of the rest. The exceptions are trees which are dying, dead or dangerous; cultivated for fruit; or whose trunks are smaller than 7.5 cm in diameter. If you want to do work to cut down, lop, top, uproot or destroy trees in conservation areas you must first give six weeks notice in writing to the Department of Planning & Environment. A form is available for this and can be obtained by telephoning the Planning Enquiry Centre on 0113 247 8000.

How can I get the right advice?

Because of the need to make sure that development in conservation areas requiring planning permission or for works to trees is of a high standard, it is recommended that all but the simplest work is handled by a suitably qualified professional with the appropriate experience. The links to the right give contacts for finding an architect or chartered surveyor or tree specialist.

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More Information is available from the following websites:

- DCMS - www.culture.gov.uk/heritage/index.html
- RIBA - www.architecture.com/go/Architecture/Using/Finding_291.html
- RICS - <http://dir.rics.org>
- Leodis - www.leodis.net
- West Yorkshire Archive Service - www.archives.wyjs.org.uk/
- Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB)- www.spab.org.uk/
- Victorian Society - www.victorian-society.org.uk/
- Georgian Group - www.georgiangroup.org.uk/