

# **HIGH ERCALL CONSERVATION AREA: MANAGEMENT PLAN**



**Telford & Wrekin Council  
High Ercall Conservation Area  
Draft Management Proposal November 2008**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Conservation Areas were first designated in England and Wales under the Civic Amenities Act 1967. Following subsequent revisions, the principle Act concerning the designation of Conservation Areas is currently the Town and Country Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Additional information regarding the designation of Conservation Areas can be found in PPG15 Planning and the Historic Environment (1994). The High Ercall Conservation Area was designated in March 1981. The map in Appendix 1 identifies the Conservation Area boundary and also identifies all the listed buildings within the boundary.

### **1.1 The purpose of the Management Plan**

The purpose of the Management Plan is to complement and re-enforce local and national government policies regarding the preservation of historic fabric and character. The proposals set down in the Management Plan are intended to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and to assist with managing change in and around the boundary. This plan should be considered in conjunction with the conservation Area Appraisal carried out in January 2008.

### **1.2 Boundary changes**

The appraisal highlighted the possibility of boundary changes within the Conservation Area. An appraisal of the proposed extension is contained in a separate document available for public consultation (first draft) in November and December 2008.

## **2. POLICY BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Local Plan policies affecting the Conservation Area**

Policy CS15: Urban Design within the LDF Core Strategy and saved policies in the Wrekin Local Plan contain a number of policies that affect the historic environment, it will seek to proactively use these policies to preserve and enhance the character of all the Conservation Areas within the Authority boundary. The policies affect all aspects of the historic environment including conservation areas, listed buildings, locally listed buildings and archaeology.

Additionally there are other policies which are relevant to some conservation areas such as retail policy. These policies are used to determine whether an application for development is appropriate for the Conservation Area. These policies can be supplemented by additional policy guidance that can give more specialised and detailed information of how such policies will be interpreted or applied.

A list of the most relevant Local Plan saved policies are contained in Appendix 2, these saved policies will be incorporated into the new LDF Core Strategy Policy CS15. This is by no means an exhaustive list of relative policies and it is recommended that the Local Development Plan is consulted in full by applicants before any development takes place. Guidance on Conservation Areas can also be found in PPG 15 Planning and the Historic Environment (1994).

## **2.2 Decision making**

All Council departments involved in decisions affecting change within the Conservation Area should understand the significance of conservation area designation and work corporately in a team approach to ensure that development decisions are appropriate for the historic context and will not damage the character of the Conservation Area and that such decisions are consistent.

## **3. MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **3.1 Dwellings and subdivision of plots**

There are 22 dwellings in the current conservation area boundary in High Ercall. They create the dominant character of the conservation area, that being large garden plots with detached properties, set back from the road frontage behind boundaries of traditional sandstone and/or mature planting. Whilst some of these properties are of modern post war construction, the majority are of period character, dating from late medieval to 19thC.

The preservation of the character of these properties is central to the preservation of the character of the conservation area. Where buildings are listed, legal controls exist to prevent inappropriate change in both design and materials. Any works that will result in a material change to the appearance or fabric of the building will require Listed Building Consent, this applies to the building entire, front and back and to fixtures and fittings on the interior. Advice should always be sought from the Council's Conservation Officer before any works are carried out.

Where properties are not listed, certain permitted development rights are allowed, these can include door and window replacements for example. (Full details of permitted development can be obtained from Telford and Wrekin Planning Department on 01952 380380). In such cases we rely on the goodwill of residents to ensure appropriate change in design and materials. The Conservation Department can provide advice on design and materials appropriate for the conservation area. Currently most unlisted dwellings have continued to maintain the quality of their design and contribute positively to the conservation area. The Council will use its available powers to ensure that inappropriate change does not occur. These include the removal of permitted development rights under an Article 4 Direction (see section 3.7).

Development pressure within the conservation area is relatively limited, with most new development taking place outside the boundary. What little development pressure there is centres around the subdivision of existing residential plots. The large plots associated with properties within the conservation area should also be preserved as they contribute positively to the conservation area, applications for subdivision of residential plots for development will be resisted by the Council.

### **3.2 Highways/boundary treatments**

The Conservation Area Appraisal clearly identifies the presence of sandstone boundary walls as being a key feature to the character of the conservation area. The Council will use its available powers to ensure that such boundaries are maintained and preserved. It will resist applications involving demolition or partial demolition of any sandstone wall within the conservation area. This includes the creation of new vehicular or pedestrian accesses or the widening of existing accesses to accommodate vehicles. Demolition or partial demolition within a conservation area requires Conservation Area Consent and this applies to boundary treatments also.

### **3.3 Trees and green spaces**

There are several Tree Preservation Orders within the area boundary, all works to trees including felling, lopping and topping, within conservation areas are subject to control. Formal notice of any such works within the Conservation Area should be made in writing to The Council. The Council will resist any application to remove trees within the Conservation Area unless it can be demonstrated that the tree is unsafe or in poor condition.

Despite the rural setting and the surrounding open countryside, there are relatively a few green spaces within the conservation area, this is partly due to the tightly drawn boundary. A boundary review is currently being undertaken

with a remit to specifically address the restricted boundary and the consequent lack of open space, this proposed boundary change will be subject to public consultation in November/December/January 2008-9.

Some of the existing open space is occupied by a field NE of the Old Vicarage, the boundary currently runs across part of this field. This area has been identified in the Local Development Framework as having some development capacity. Its presence within the conservation area will not prevent development but may contribute to a higher standard of design, appropriate to the character of the conservation area.

### **3.4 Public realm**

Public realm refers to those items within the Conservation Area that do not constitute buildings, such as road signage and street furniture. Due to the nature of the conservation area, fronting a highway, there is little space for street furniture that which is present is relatively unobtrusive.

### **3.5 Services**

Where services such as gas or electricity meters, intruder alarms, air conditioning and extraction facilities are introduced to properties they should be confined to the rear where at all possible to avoid unsightly intrusions and clutter on frontages. Where this is not possible services should be located and designed sensitively to cause minimum intrusion. This is particularly so with satellite dishes which should not be placed prominently on the street frontage.

### **3.6 Vacancy and Building Maintenance**

#### **Vacancy**

Vacancy is currently not an issue in High Ercall, where all properties are occupied.

#### **Maintenance**

The Council will encourage and offer advice to owners and tenants on appropriate levels of maintenance; this will be available on the conservation page of The Council's web site and in hard copy by request. Lack of appropriate maintenance is the single biggest threat to the character and/or

survival of period buildings in the Conservation Area. Maintenance is a necessary fact, and cost, of property ownership or tenancy and cannot and should not be avoided. A regular schedule of maintenance should be drawn up; the Council can advise owners and tenants on drawing up an appropriate maintenance schedule and advice on building repairs.

Properties within High Ercall Conservation Area are generally well maintained, however, it has been noticed that modern materials are creeping in to period properties. Modern materials, principally uPVC windows, doors, fascia boards and rainwater goods, are often perceived as 'maintenance free' and therefore are an appealing alternative to traditional materials for many homeowners. However, plastic architectural elements often fail to replicate traditional styles and generally have a detrimental effect on the character of period properties. There is no substitute for the quality of *traditional* designs and materials.

Where a property is listed the owner has a legal responsibility to maintain their property to a basic level and the Council may enforce this if it deems it necessary. For unlisted buildings the Council has the power to serve a Section 215 Notice, for untidy buildings (see section 7: Enforcement Strategy). These powers can be enforced where the degree of disrepair is deemed to be detrimental to the character of the Conservation Area or the building itself.

### **3.7 Article 4 Direction**

Best practice guidance from the management of conservation areas, produced by English Heritage, requires consideration of the use of Article 4 Directions to remove permitted development rights from dwelling houses fronting a highway. Such directions should only be used as a last resort, where agreement with residents to use appropriate materials and designs cannot be sustained. At present it is not necessary to implement such a measure as inappropriate change is not a serious issue in the area. However, during the life of the plan (5 years) works to windows, doors, porches, boundary walls, chimneys, roofing materials, exterior finishes, creation of an access onto unclassified roads, and inappropriate extensions and alterations to dwellings will be closely monitored. If any of the above mentioned elements (or any other permitted development element not mentioned here) are deemed to causing detriment to the character of the conservation area, the Council can use its available powers to apply such a Direction. In such a case residents will be notified in writing.

### **3.8 Buildings of Local Interest**

Buildings of local interest are protected under both the saved policies within the Wrekin Local Plan and within Core Strategy 15 in the new Local

Development Framework. Demolition or partial demolition of these properties will be resisted, as will any alteration that is deemed to be detrimental to the character of the building.

There are currently no recommendations for additions to the Local List. The Council is always happy to receive any request for properties to be considered for inclusion, this should be done in writing with any supporting evidence. A copy of the Local List entries for High Ercall is available to view at the Councils offices in Darby House.

## **4. OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCEMENT**

### **4.1 Enhancement**

High Ercall represents a well maintained conservation area, there are no vacancy issues and even where modern development has occurred it has not necessarily been to the detriment of the conservation area. Therefore there are no 'problem areas' within the current boundary. Opportunities for enhancement will be actively monitored over the life of the Management Plan.

### **4.2 New Development**

As mentioned in section 3.1 subdivision of existing residential plots for development will be resisted by the Council as this is likely to have a detrimental effect on the character of the residential element of the conservation area. However, the field NW of the Old Rectory has been identified as having some development capacity. This is the only part of the conservation area where there could arguably be seen to be development potential. Any development here will be expected to respect the general form of other residences within the conservation area; this includes design, materials, scale and massing. High density housing or housing that fails to reflect the character of the surrounding area will be resisted.

## **5. ARCHAEOLOGY**

Archaeological deposits have been recorded from within and around the historic core of High Ercall and the Central Marches Historic Towns Survey has identified that there is moderate potential for the location of further buried remains, deposits of artefacts and ecofacts within the historic core area (the church and hall). Previous deposits include medieval floor tiles and pottery. Little is known of the first manor house of the de Ercall family, though excavations have revealed the a probable tower, gate house and moat. Subsequent re-building, particularly during the construction of the Civil War defences is likely to have destroyed much earlier evidence, though some is likely to survive.



It acknowledges that subsequent re-building of the associated settlement in the post medieval period means that potential for undisturbed archaeological remains for the medieval period in this area is low. Generally speaking, little investigative work has been undertaken within High Ercall

It is likely that the existing roads through High Ercall follow earlier medieval roads and trackways. As such these are unlikely to provide many archaeological deposits, though the perseverance of such routes is in itself an important landscape feature.

Where the Council feels it necessary, development that may potentially disturb archaeological material, will be required to provide an archaeological survey before, during and/or after the development. This can range from a simple desk top survey, to a watching brief to a full excavation prior to development.

There is a Scheduled Ancient Monument within the grounds of the Church, a sundial based on an old cross base. When inspected, the sundial was missing from the structure. It has been suggested that the sundial has been removed to the Church. If this is the case then then Scheduled Monument Consent should have been sought prior to its removal. Failure to seek approved consent from English Heritage is an offence under the Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, further guidance can be found in PPG16 Archaeology and Planning.

## **6. Statement of Community Involvement**

The High Ercall Conservation Area Appraisal was subject to public consultation during 2008. This Draft Management Plan will be subject to ongoing periodic consultation with the local community, community groups and business owners as per the monitoring and review strategy (Section 8 Monitoring and Review).

## **7. ENFORCEMENT STRATEGY**

### **7.1 Principle Powers**

In addition to the planning policies referred to previously, the Local Planning Authority has at its disposal a number of powers available under the Planning Acts to ensure that issues affecting the historic environment are proactively managed. The principle powers available include;

*Amenity of Land Notice (Section 215 Town and Country Planning Act 1990)*

*Urgent Works Notice – Listed Buildings (Section 54 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990)*

*Urgent Works Notice – Unlisted Buildings (Section 76 Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990)*

*Repairs Notice (Section 48 Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990)*

*Compulsory Purchase Order (Section 47 Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990)*

*Planning Enforcement Notice (Section 172 Town and Country Planning Act 1990)*

*Listed Building Enforcement Notice (Section 9 Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990)*

*Conservation Area Enforcement Notice (Section 38 Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990)*

Note: Where appropriate the LPA will see to recover costs from the owner in relation to works carried out to the property.

## **8. MONITORING AND REVIEW**

Best practice set out by English Heritage in “*Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas*” (2007) requires a regular review of all Conservation Area Appraisals and the creation and regular review of Conservation Area Management Plans. This review is to take place on a 5 year rolling program for all 7 of Telford and Wrekin Conservation Areas.

It is intended that the High Ercall Conservation Area Management Plan will be adopted by The Council following public consultation.

As a boundary changes are proposed in the conservation area, if approved these extensions will be subject to the same considerations contained here in this Management Plan. This Management Plan is applicable to the entire conservation area both within its current boundaries and within any future changes to the boundary within the life of this document.

Proposed boundary changes and any Article 4 Directions will be subject to separate public consultation if the changes are deemed appropriate.

**APPENDIX 1: MAP OF THE EXISTING CONSERVATION AREA  
BOUNDARY AND LISTED BUILDINGS**

