



OXTON VILLAGE CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN

Prepared by Wirral Council in conjunction with The Oxtun Society
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PREFACE

1 Background to the Study

This management plan has been prepared by Wirral Council in partnership with The Oxton Society. It follows on from the Conservation Area Appraisal prepared by Donald Insall Associates, adopted by the Council in 2010, and the boundary changes therein recommended. The Society has provided much information and support to the local authority and the content of this document is partly a reflection of that process.

2 Role of the Management Plan and Implementation

The plan is underpinned by the appraisal, which provides the evidence-base and analysis to support the recommended policies and actions in the following sections. The appraisal document, in addition to identifying the special character of Oxton Village highlights some threats and challenges to its survival - some real, others potential. It is in part the purpose of the management plan to help create a culture of co-operative working between the local authority and partner organisations, in part by fostering an appreciation of Oxton's heritage and the demands that its appropriate conservation places on all organisations, public and private.

The aim of the guidance is to:

- (i) encourage the need for all Council departments and associated organisations, e.g. statutory undertakers to work in tandem to help realise conservation objectives.
- (ii) to provide guidance to home- and business owners on how policies might be developed and implemented to support successful conservation.
- (iii) encourage the need for further research and investigations to be undertaken to support specific needs, e.g. traffic management.

This guidance is based in part on the English Heritage publication "Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas", published in 2006, and its follow-up document, "Valuing Places: Good Practice in Conservation Areas".

3 Summary of Special Interest

The special interest of Oxton Conservation Area is not easy to summarise as it contains a surprising degree of variety within a compact urban area. This is reflected later in this analysis by the use of smaller 'character

zones' within the whole CA.

The key elements of this special interest may be summarised as follows:

- Variety within a limited range of building development forms
- Sense of seclusion from the greater urban area of Birkenhead
- General high quality of buildings and structures
- unifying effect of historic sandstone walls which bind together a diverse range of building types.
- Heavy tree canopy providing green-ness and a good air quality
- Generally small scale but unexpected large mature dwellings
- A rural remnant
- Openness towards the edges, but compactness in the middle
- A largely intact early – mid 19th C idyll

4 The Planning Policy Context

Since the 1967 Civic Amenities Act local authorities have been empowered to designate as Conservation Areas those areas within their districts which were considered 'special'. The subsequent Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act of 1990 consolidated those powers and defined Conservation Areas as:-

"areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance".

Such areas are diverse. They may be large or small; residential or commercial; civic or industrial; old or relatively modern. They may represent social ideals or civic pride. They may be specifically designed or speculatively produced; modest or grand. They may contain Listed Buildings of architectural or historic interest or may simply have local historic association. However, common to all will be an identifiable environmental quality that should be protected from unsympathetic redevelopment or alteration.

Wirral Council has designated 25 Conservation Areas throughout the Borough reflecting the variety of building styles and environments exhibited within its borders.

The content of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is clarified by national Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS5): Planning and the Historic Environment. This document places a distinct emphasis on significance, now given equal prominence to considerations of character, to which latter characteristic the legislation still principally refers. PPS5 contains a new emphasis on local distinctiveness and undesignated assets, such as unscheduled

archaeology, landscapes and artistic values, and replaces former PPGs 15&16.

The principles of these documents are further supported by Wirral Council's local Heritage Conservation policies contained within its adopted Unitary Development Plan (February 2000).

Forthcoming LDF

Wirral Borough Council will progressively replace the adopted UDP with the Local Development Framework (LDF) for the Borough. The LDF Core Strategy is at an advanced stage of preparation and sets out the Council's long-term planning and development priorities. Following its adoption a series of more detailed documents will set out the local and site specific implications.

The emerging Core Strategy has identified the protection of local distinctiveness and high quality design as important policy objectives. Subsequent LDF documents, including Settlement Area policies will contain specific conservation and design policies, updated to reflect the present day challenges of traditional buildings and townscapes, and reflecting the content of appraisals and management plans.

5.0 ISSUES, POLICIES AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

5.1 UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND OTHER EXISTING PLANNING POLICY

5.1.1 The vast majority of land within Oxton is classed as 'Primarily Residential', but with commercial businesses operating from the village centre, and there being some green spaces also, e.g. the bowling green. Interim policies, which will be replaced by the emerging Core Strategy, currently restrict the potential for new dwellings for sale on the open market, although there is no specific impediment to the creation of new "affordable" housing. Applications for planning permission would be assessed for compliance with the policies set out in the Council's UDP and in particular policies CH01, CH1, CH2 and CH7 as set out in Section 11, as well as Supplementary Guidance Notes, e.g. SPG21, and alongside any general strategic policies in the emerging Core Strategy.

5.1.2 The emerging Core Strategy proposes to formally designate the village centre as a Local Centre for neighbourhood level shops and services to serve everyday needs.

Issue	Location
The future re-designation of land within or around the conservation area in the Local Development Framework may be detrimental to its character or setting.	Throughout
Policy	
The future re-designation of land within or around the conservation area in the Local Development Framework should be considered in terms the effects on of its special character and setting.	
Action	Priority
Consider special character of area and its appropriate management, undertake appropriate consultation and develop specific conservation policies before any proposed changes are realised.	Mid-long-term

APPLICATION AND INTERPRETATION OF EXISTING AND FUTURE POLICY	
Issue	Location
Policies CH01, CH1, CH2 and CH7, together with the guidance in PPS5, may not always be rigorously applied during the planning process, resulting in development or changes to buildings which are detrimental to the character of the conservation area.	Throughout
Policy recommendation	
Ensure that all new development within the conservation area complies with polices CH01, CH1, CH2 and CH7, SPG 21 (including prospective LDF policies), together with the relevant sections of PPS5 and other government guidance.	
Action	Priority
Rigorous inspection of planning, conservation area and listed building consent applications. Improve allocated resources and knowledge of planning, heritage and conservation staff to ensure that proper consideration is given to these issues in applications.	Immediate

5.2 NEW DEVELOPMENT AND ALTERATION TO EXISTING BUILDINGS AND SITES

- 5.2.1 In the event of new development being allowed under the criteria set out above, the following recommendations are made regarding the quality and character of new development, scale, materials, and effect on views:

QUALITY OF NEW BUILDINGS

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Issue	Location
Any potential buildings constructed within the conservation area may not be of an equal quality and do not have the design attributes of the historic buildings that characterise the area, therefore cannot be shown to be preserving or enhancing its character.	Throughout
Policy recommendations	
In any new development within the Oxton Conservation Area, there should be a presumption in favour of using traditional materials such as red or London buff brick, natural buff sandstone, lime stucco render, timber joinery, slate and cast iron / lead / zinc for rainwater goods.	
Any new buildings should match the quality of materials and level of architectural design of the original buildings.	
The use of contrasting modern materials of the highest quality may be appropriate if it can be satisfactorily demonstrated that they do not have an adverse effect on the setting of neighbouring existing buildings.	
The use of imitation materials such as poor quality reconstituted stone or artificial slate should not be permitted.	
Action	Priority
Use more stringent design criteria in determining future planning applications and require that all applications are accompanied by relevant design details including materials, sections and schedules of work / method statements.	Immediate

SCALE, MASSING, POSITION OR PROPORTIONS OF NEW BUILDINGS	
Issue	Location
New buildings may detract from existing buildings in terms of their scale, massing, position or proportions.\	Throughout
Policy recommendations	
New buildings generally should be no higher than existing buildings comparable within their immediate vicinity in terms of both their eaves and ridge heights.	
New buildings should respect the footprint sizes of existing neighbouring buildings and their relationships with each other (spacing), the road and their site boundaries.	
New buildings should match the floor-to-ceiling heights and general proportions of existing neighbouring historic buildings.	

Action	Priority
Promote an understanding of the special qualities of the conservation area. Use more stringent design criteria in determining future planning applications and require that all applications are accompanied by relevant design details.	Immediate

EFFECT OF DEVELOPMENT ON KEY VIEWS	
Issue	Location
New development or extensions to existing buildings may adversely affect key views within, or the setting of, the conservation area.	Throughout
Policy recommendation	
Applications for planning permission for new development or significant extensions to existing buildings within the conservation area must demonstrate, where appropriate, that key views or the setting of the conservation area are not adversely affected, by incorporating contextual street elevations and CAD projections.	
Action	Priority
Take into account the impact of any proposed new building on the key views, for example those identified in the Character Appraisal, when determining planning applications	Immediate

5.2.2 SPG 16 “Landscaping and New Development” and SPG 17 “Trees and Development” set out guidance on landscaping throughout Wirral. The following are matters which have been identified as particular issues in the Oxton Village Conservation Area:

LANDSCAPING ASSOCIATED WITH NEW OR EXISTING BUILDINGS	
Issue	Location
Oxton has a rich and well appreciated arboriculture and mature gardens – its contribution needs to be acknowledged in any development scheme. Poor or inappropriate landscaping around new buildings or extensions to existing buildings can detract from the character of the area.	Throughout
Policy recommendations	
A detailed landscaping scheme should be submitted with any planning application for new buildings or significant alteration to existing sites.	

<p>The magnitude of necessary car parking should be considered alongside the level of occupation of any proposed building. Schemes for buildings that require an extent of car parking / number of cars that will detract from the character of the conservation area should be rejected.</p>	
<p>New buildings should preserve existing areas of mature trees and other landscaping. Where any trees are removed, they should be replaced with semi-mature trees of the same or more appropriate species (e.g. native).</p>	
Action	Priority
<p>Use more stringent landscape and urban design criteria in determining future planning applications and require that all applications for substantial new built development are accompanied by full landscaping schemes.</p>	<p>Immediate</p>

PROTECTION, RETENTION AND PROVISION OF HEDGES AND TREES	
Issue	Location
<p>To maintain and enhance the character of the area attention needs to be paid to the retention of trees and boundary hedges.</p>	<p>Throughout</p>
Policy recommendations	
<p>Trees which contribute to the character of the conservation area should be retained and if needing to be removed for reasons of health, replaced by trees of appropriate species and maturity.</p>	
<p>Planting of further trees and hedges of native species should be promoted, particularly in areas devoid of such trees and hedges. The Oxton Society's Tree Group has been a valued partner in preserving the diverse arboricultural interest of Oxton, and the tradition of close co-operation between this group and the local authority should be further fostered.</p>	
Action	Priority
<p>Promote an understanding of the special qualities of hedges and trees within the conservation area. Use more stringent design criteria in determining future planning applications and require that all applications are accompanied by clear proposals for the treatment of trees and hedges and any replacement planting. Encourage the use of Tree Preservation Orders and review existing TPOs to ensure that they are still relevant and consider whether new TPOs are needed to protect significant elements of the area's mature landscaping.</p>	<p>Immediate</p>

5.2.3 Extensions to dwellings are covered by Policy HS 11 in the UDP in terms of house extensions. The policy covers matters relating to scale, materials, design details, dormers, set backs of extensions and retention of amenity space. The following are additional matters which have been identified as particular issues in the Oxton Village Conservation Area:

EXTENSIONS TO BUILDINGS	
Issue	Location
Extensions to buildings within the conservation area may detract from the significance of the individual building or the setting of adjoining buildings.	Throughout
Policy Recommendations	
Extensions to those buildings that have been shown to contribute to the conservation area should only be permitted where it can be satisfactorily demonstrated that the additional structure has no adverse impact on the principal elevations of the parent structure. Extensions should be subservient to the parent building	
The choice of the materials of the extension should be considered so as to provide the minimum visual distraction from the original structure. Generally, it should be assumed that materials should match in terms of colour and texture. Traditional and/or natural materials such as sandstone, brick, timber, lead / zinc / iron, terracotta on and slate should be used unless an alternative can be adequately justified in terms of its visual effect on the conservation area. Where buildings are extended using traditional forms and materials, the subtle dating of the new element should be encouraged.	
Where a building has existing detrimental features, the opportunity should be taken to secure improvements as part of the new building work.	
There should be a strong presumption against extensions that adversely affect the balance of pairs or groups of buildings that have symmetry and visual balance as one of their original predominant design characteristics.	
Dormers, if acceptable, should be confined to rear elevations, situated below the ridge and of a scale and design appropriate to the building on which they are mounted.	
Action	Priority
Use more stringent design criteria in determining future planning applications taking into account the approach outlined above.	Immediate

5.2.4 In carrying out conversions or alterations to the fabric of buildings and boundaries the following good conservation practice should be applied:

ALTERATION TO THE FABRIC OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS	
Issue	Location
Alterations to the historic fabric of a building can lead to the loss of some of its visual history and aesthetic value and can be detrimental to the visual setting of the area as a whole.	All higher category buildings
Policy recommendations	
Where alterations can be justified to be necessary for the continued use of the building they should be prioritised towards the less significant areas of the building.	
Alterations should be chosen that require the least possible degree of permanent loss of or change to historic fabric. For instance, secondary glazing should be installed in preference to the wholesale replacement of existing windows.	
Where replacement of existing original or early fabric is proven necessary it should always be done on a like-for-like basis where possible, not exchanging materials for modern alternatives.	
Existing original or early features should be retained if at all possible. Where their replacement is necessary, it should be on a like-for-like basis in terms of materials and design. Any changes to primary features such as historic windows, doors, chimneys should be avoided if at all possible.	
Action	Priority
Use more stringent design criteria in determining future planning applications and require that all applications are accompanied by relevant design details. Prepare guidance leaflets for local residents. Consider the introduction of an Article 4 Direction to remove permitted development rights on undesignated buildings as and when resources permit. To work with the Oxton Society to create a register of significant historic buildings, and their valuable features, to assist with their ongoing preservation and enhancement. Take enforcement action where appropriate.	Immediate

INSTALLATION OF NEW FIXTURES	
Issue	Location
Particular care should be taken in the use and location of microgeneration equipment to minimise intrusion on the	All buildings

building or its setting.	
Policy recommendation	
The installation of rooflights and solar panels into existing roof slopes should not generally be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that they are not visible from public areas or adversely affect the setting of other buildings. Any rooflights installed should be of a 'conservation' type and fixed flush with the roof covering.	
Building owners should be strongly encouraged to only install satellite dishes and aerials in positions not visible from public areas or adversely affect the setting of other buildings	
Building owners should be strongly encouraged not to install ventilators and other fixtures onto roof slopes or prominent elevations. Where they are absolutely necessary their visual impact should be minimised in terms of their location, number, size and design.	
Whilst microgeneration of energy is to be encouraged in terms of conservation principles, the impact on buildings and their settings within the conservation area should be minimised by careful positioning on building elements and locations not visible from public areas.	
Action	Priority
Use more stringent design criteria in determining future planning applications and require that all applications are accompanied by relevant design details. Take enforcement action where appropriate. The relevant planning policies should be rigorously applied.	Short term

LOSS OR ALTERATION TO BOUNDARY WALLS	
Issue	Location
The loss of or alteration to boundary walls, traditional gates and gateposts could affect a significant feature of the character of the conservation area may and detract from its integrity.	Throughout
Policy recommendation	
All existing historic boundary walls and gateposts should be retained. Alteration as part of any planning permission should only be permitted in exceptional circumstances and when fully justified and mitigated. Should be a strong presumption in favour of resisting the loss of traditional boundary walls and vegetation in order to create accesses or forecourt parking.	
Action	Priority

Consider the introduction of an Article 4 Direction, as and when resources permit, to selectively remove permitted development (pd) rights on works to sandstone walls. Continue to work with the Oxton Society to create a register of the location and condition of all historic walls and gate posts to assist in their ongoing preservation and enhancement. Take enforcement action where the majority of a wall has removed unlawfully in excess of that allowed under pd rights.	Immediate
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CHANGES OF USE	
Issue	Location
Changes of use of an existing building (subject to existing policy) can result in a number of incremental changes which result in an adverse effect on the conservation area.	All buildings
Policy recommendation	
In considering applications for change of use, the council will require information on the design of refuse storage, waste pipes, ventilation fixtures, satellite dishes and aerials, any other fixtures, servicing, signage and car parking.	
Action	Priority
Promote an understanding of the special qualities of the conservation area. Use more stringent design criteria in determining future planning applications and require that all applications are accompanied by relevant design details.	Immediate

5.3 GENERAL GUIDANCE AND IMPROVEMENTS

5.3.1 The following are recommendations relating to building condition, management of the public realm, highway matters, and involvement of local groups in securing improvements to the Conservation Area. They have major implications in terms of staff resource and finance but are set out as an agenda for future action.

CONDITION / MAINTENANCE OF EXISTING PUBLIC REALM AREAS	
Issue	Location
The existing public realm areas may be insufficiently maintained or specified and act as a poor example to conservation area residents.	Throughout

Policy recommendation	
The existing public realm areas should be maintained and where necessary replanted / resurfaced to a standard that befits the conservation area and enhances the setting of the existing buildings.	
Action	Priority
Regularly monitor condition of public realm areas, identify improvements and agree action with other Council departments and statutory undertakers.	Short-term

DETRIMENTAL CHANGES TO LISTED BUILDINGS	
Issue	Location
There have in the past been a number of detrimental changes to listed buildings, such as insertion of replacement windows and changes to chimneys, boundary walls and roof coverings. These are not only detrimental to the appearance of the individual buildings and their immediate setting, but they are also setting a poor precedent to other building owners.	Listed buildings
Policy recommendation	
Owners of listed buildings should be notified of unauthorised changes to their buildings. Where evidence is available, (e.g. in the form of dated photographs) enforcement should be taken to ensure the reinstatement of the original fabric unless retrospective consent can be given.	

CONDITION OF INDIVIDUAL SITES AND BUILDINGS	
Issue	Location
The condition of an individual site or building can be detrimental to the appearance of the area and may set a poor example to other owners.	Throughout
Policy recommendation	
The local authority should serve section 215 notices on owners of buildings or land whose condition adversely affects the amenity of the area, requiring them to remedy the detriments or face the necessary costs for the local authority to do so.	
Under section 54 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Urgent Works Notices should be used to secure emergency or immediate repairs on any unoccupied building (or part of a building) within a Conservation Area where it adversely affects the character of the area. Where the building is unlisted a direction from the Secretary of State will be required.	
Use Empty Property Legislation to secure the proper security, stability and	

<p>eventual constructive reuse of problem buildings and sites.</p> <p>Continue to issue guidance leaflets to all residents and businesses within the conservation area explaining the benefits of good, regular maintenance and appropriate repair techniques.</p>	
Action	Priority
<p>Regularly visit the conservation area, noting any sites or buildings in a poor condition. Serve relevant notices where appropriate.</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p>

HIGHWAYS - SURFACES, MARKINGS AND SIGNAGE	
Issue	Location
<p>Highway markings and signage can be visually intrusive and detrimental to its character and appearance. Highway features, such as speed control measures may be visually obtrusive and of an inappropriate design / materials. Unmade roads should be treated sympathetically, with minor resurfacing carried out in natural materials such as brick pavements, gravel and stone set in bitumen. In the past, cast iron street and other traditional signage has not always been faithfully reinstated or repaired after failure, removal or maintenance.</p>	<p>Roads and pavements</p>
Policy recommendations	
<p>Reconsider all existing signage, highways features and markings and make necessary improvements to enhance the character of the area, whilst maintaining / enhancing the safety of all village users.</p>	
<p>Encourage the retention, repair and the increased use of traditional paving, such as cobbles and York stone flags, within the designated area, especially where these could contribute to speed control measures on secondary and tertiary routes.</p>	
<p>Ensure that all cast iron and other traditional signs are reinstated faithfully in a cast metal replica, as and when they are removed for whatever reason.</p>	
<p>Ensure that all future highways features, such as speed control measures, railings etc are proven to be necessary and are of an appropriate design and constructed of appropriate materials.</p>	
Action	Priority
<p>Undertake an assessment of existing signage, highways features and markings in terms of their impact on the character of the area. Obtain advice on appropriate</p>	<p>Mid-term</p>

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alternatives (e.g. narrower lines etc). Pursue statutory undertakers who abuse footpaths and roads by not faithfully reinstating surfaces like-for-like. Establish protocols for these actions, including consultation with amenity groups about the installation of replacement replica street signs.	
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TRAFFIC	
Issue	Location
The level and type of traffic through the village is at times detrimental to the village's character and can be in conflict with the free movement of pedestrians, cyclists and disabled users. There is an increasing pressure on parking spaces often resulting in anti-social or problematic parking in the village centre and its immediate environs.	Roads
Policy	
There is an aspiration for a Traffic Management and Parking Plan that would protect and enhance the historic character of Oxton Village, improve circulation, reduce conflict between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles and reduce existing problems with parking.	
Action	Priority
Draw up a traffic management and parking plan in consultation with local societies, residents and businesses. Should be part of a Public Realm Strategy. Identify opportunities for short-term, minor and inexpensive improvements to traffic circulation and parking; implement as and when resources permit.	Ongoing

ARCHAEOLOGY	
Issue	Location
The character of Oxton village is that of an area that contains buildings from many periods, with much modern development in between more historical buildings. However, some buildings and sites may extend further back into the past and incorporate earlier structures. Other pre-industrial remains may lie under and within the curtilage of more modern structures.	-
Policy recommendations	
Promote the understanding and appreciation of archaeology from all periods	

amongst the community and in terms of conservation planning within the local authority.	
Ensure that qualified conservation staff are consulted on all development and demolition applications within and adjacent to the conservation area, especially where archaeological potential is highlighted in the record.	
Action	Priority
Maintain a fully functional and accessible Historic Environment Record for Wirral / the region, with dedicated, qualified staff, as a repository of all archaeological records within the Borough. Secure the provision of professional archaeological advice. Ensure good communication between all parties.	Immediate

SHOP FRONTAGES	
Issue	Location
The central area of Oxton village contains the area's principal retail activity, with a range of smaller shops that cater for local needs. Several of these shops still retain their traditional appearance and joinery / fenestration, but are vulnerable to unsympathetic alteration, the installation of inappropriate signage and roller shutters. Metal shutters have not only an adverse visual effect – they can create a threatening and unwelcoming ambience throughout the local area if they are allowed to proliferate. Where security concerns exist, these can be better tackled through the use of thicker glass and interior lattice or timber shutters.	-
Policy recommendations	
Promote the understanding and appreciation of traditional shopfronts, ensure that the Council's shopfronts policy SPG 43 is rigorously applied.	
Ensure that qualified conservation staff are consulted on all applications relating to shopfront alterations and retail units within and adjacent to the conservation area.	
Action	Priority
Enforce against breaches of planning control where the installation of exterior roller shutters and other unauthorised alterations adversely affect the appearance of shops and their immediate environment. Promote more suitable means of securing shops against damage without recourse to roller shutters.	
Promote the use and appreciation of Shopfront Design Guidance, and develop a new policy on Shop frontages for	Immediate

the forthcoming LDF .	
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PUBLIC AWARENESS AND CONTRIBUTION	
Issue	Location
Residents are sometimes unaware of the purpose of a conservation area, the benefits designation may have for them and how they may influence the future of conservation in their area. The skills and expertise of local residents groups, individuals or stakeholders may be underutilised. The Oxton Society has contributed in great measure to the production of both the Appraisal and the Management Plan.	Throughout
Policy recommendations	
Make conservation area information readily available to residents, using the internet and other displays to publicise conservation projects.	
Encourage dialogue between local residents groups and major landowners to promote enhancement and appropriate maintenance works within the conservation area.	
Action	Priority
Continue to promote an understanding of the special qualities of the conservation area by issuing guidance leaflets for residents and businesses. To work in partnership with the Oxton Society and other amenity groups to promote the special character of Oxton and its appropriate conservation in the longer term.	Immediate

6.0 Article 4 Directions

- 6.2.1 The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2008 allows building owners to carry out a range of minor developments without planning consent subject to limits and conditions. These 'permitted development' rights are automatically limited within conservation areas: restrictions include the addition of dormer windows, various types of cladding, the erection of satellite dishes fronting a highway and the reduction in the size of extensions.
- 6.2.2 Article 4 of the General Permitted Development Order enables local authorities to withdraw some specified permitted development rights on buildings or land, such as removal of a chimney, changes around the front boundary of a building, construction of porches, painting of houses or removal of architectural features such as windows and doors. Local authorities should notify local people and take account of their opinions before confirming an Article 4 direction. Approval from the Secretary of State is no longer a requirement for an Article 4 (1) direction.

6.2.3 Article 4 directions are not just an automatic consequence of conservation area designation, but should be borne out of a careful assessment of what is of special interest within an area that should be preserved. Permitted development rights should only be withdrawn where there is evidence to prove that such works would damage the character of a conservation area and are of current concern.

6.2.4 In the case of Oxton, the following items have been identified within the Conservation Area Appraisal part of this document as being important to the character of the area and therefore it should be considered whether it is practicable to place a direction across a selection of category A and B buildings (within a designated pilot area) to protect them from loss or change without consent for the following elements:

- Windows
- Doors
- Roof coverings
- Removal / application of stucco render to walls
- Solar Panels & microgeneration equipment
- Loss of chimneys
- The creation of new, or the blocking up, of old openings over a certain size in house walls.
- Alterations to, or partial demolition of, property boundaries fronting onto a highway.

Similarly, it would be prudent to extend any Article 4 Direction to terraces of housing that exhibit a consistent set of building forms and details, and where any departure from a consistent aesthetic would be detrimental to the overall character, for example sections of Birch Road.

In addition, the appraisal identifies the critical contribution made by historic boundary walls to the character and appearance of the area, in particular those constructed traditionally in sandstone. Further consideration should therefore be given to their inclusion in an Article 4 Direction to protect them from further loss or change without consent.

Practical considerations in relation to operational realities may need to be addressed, since not all sandstone walls enclose character properties of a higher category. Therefore the direction may have to be not only targeted at a set of features but also be sufficiently consistent and straightforward so that residents were able to identify a simple set of procedures to follow.

ARTICLE 4 DIRECTIONS	
Issue	Location
Small scale alterations to buildings in the conservation area	All higher

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<p>can lead to a gradual and progressive loss to its character. Article 4 directions can bring such alterations under control as matters requiring planning permission</p> <p>The loss of or alteration to boundary walls and gateposts would adversely affect a significant feature of the character of the conservation area and detract from the architectural integrity of the area as a whole.</p>	<p>category buildings and historic terraces.</p> <p>All historic walls</p>
Policy recommendation	
<p>Consider whether it is practicable to instate an Article 4 directions in respect of withdrawal of permitted development rights for removing / altering specific building and landscaping elements.</p>	
Action	Priority
<p>Consider the introduction of Article 4 Direction to remove permitted development rights on in respect of windows and doors / exterior joinery; boundary features and structures; roof coverings and roof features; colour and surface treatment of elevations; microgeneration installations - as and when resources permit. Take enforcement action where appropriate.</p>	<p>Short to mid-term</p>