

Part One

POLICIES, ROLES AND DESIGN PRINCIPLES

I.1 Background : Advice and Policies

Conservation areas in Suffolk are both an environmental and economic asset. However, they are all, in different ways, under increasing pressures from change and development at a time when there is increased public awareness of the quality of the environment. Indeed an attractive historic environment can be a catalyst for economic regeneration or success. It is essential therefore that careful consideration should be given to preserving their positive qualities whilst at the same time encouraging improvements to be made so that they remain alive and prosperous. In order to achieve this it is vital that not only the appropriate economic climate exists but also the environment is attractive and well maintained. This invariably means investment in public areas.

When work is carried out in conservation areas it should be undertaken to a standard which is of sufficient quality both in technical and visual terms. This can only be achieved through a combination of active cooperation and a positive financial commitment from all those concerned.

I.1.1 Planning Legislation

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990, places a duty on all local planning authorities to identify the parts of their areas which are of special architectural and historic interest and to designate them as conservation areas. The legislation stipulates however that designation of a conservation area should only be seen as a preliminary step to preserve or enhance its character and not as an end result in itself. It is a requirement under Section 72(1) that following designation "special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area".

Local authorities can, using the powers vested in them under planning legislation, control the location and form of many new developments within conservation areas, but they do not have the power to

control all the changes that take place. A substantial amount of work can still be carried out on both private and public land without the need for consent under the Town and Country Planning Acts. Significant change can therefore take place, and can potentially be extremely damaging to the character and appearance of the area.

I.1.2 Highway Legislation

The work undertaken by the statutory undertakers and the highway authority can have particularly far-reaching implications. Suffolk County Council as Highway Authority is under a duty to maintain highways maintainable at public expense (Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980). Standards to which this duty is discharged are recommended in the Local Authority Associations' Code of Good Practice for Highway Maintenance which, although not statutory, is adopted by the County Council with local variations.

The County Council also has a statutory duty under the 1988 Road Traffic Act to prepare and carry out a programme of works designed to promote road safety.

The New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 requires statutory undertakers to give advance notice of their works to the highway authority when working in the highway. The amount of notice varies depending on the nature, extent and location of the works. There is an obligation for them to reinstate to a standard which at least matches the original condition.



1.1.3 Central Government Advice

Current Central Government advice to Local Authorities on the issue of highway maintenance and improvement work in conservation areas is contained in Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 15: "Planning and the Historic Environment" which states that:

4.10 "The character and appearance of many conservation areas is heavily dependent on the treatment of roads, pavements and other public spaces. It is important that conservation policies are fully integrated with other policies for the area".

Chapter 5 of PPG 15 is devoted to Transport and Traffic Management and covers new traffic routes, work to listed structures and those in conservation areas, traffic calming, floorscape and street furniture including road signs. This chapter is included as Appendix A to this document.

Department of Transport Traffic Advisory Leaflet 1/96 also deals with "Traffic Management in Historic Areas" and gives invaluable advice on good practice.

1.1.4 County and District Policy

The Suffolk County Council Structure Plan has policies which relate to preserving and enhancing conservation areas. Policy ENV 1 states:-

ENV 1 "The character and setting of conservation areas and buildings listed as being of special architectural and/or historic interest will be protected and enhanced"...

The District Councils in Suffolk have produced District-wide Local Plans which contain conservation policies. These plans outline the approach of each Council to preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of their conservation areas. In addition many councils have adopted supplementary planning guidance in the form of conservation area character appraisals which highlight the special qualities of individual areas.

The County Council's policies relating to highway maintenance, safety and traffic management are set out in the Transport Policies and Programme (TPP) which is reviewed annually.

The County and District Councils are all committed to Local Agenda 21 and have adopted policies to ensure services fully consider the implications of sustainable development and the retention of local distinctiveness and character.

There is therefore an obligation placed upon all local authorities to consider carrying out more than just the minimum when undertaking new projects or maintenance work on highway land in conservation areas.

Obviously public safety has to be of paramount importance and the ease of movement of pedestrians and traffic, parking requirements, capital and maintenance costs are all important considerations. However, these are not the only criteria, and should be balanced with any visual or conservation issues. It is essential therefore that local authorities, when undertaking projects in sensitive locations, work in partnership with one another in order to produce schemes which not only function well in terms of highway requirements but also make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of a conservation area.



(Sudbury)

1.2 Roles Of Local Authorities

When implementing highway works in conservation areas it is important that the respective roles of the County Council, their Agents and the District Councils are recognised and that there is a level of agreement over which procedures should be followed. In many instances Town and Parish Councils also have an important role to play.

County Council

The Environment and Transport Department of the County Council has responsibilities as both highway and planning authorities.

1.2.1 Role of the County Council as Highway Authority

- Notify the County Planning Authority, and the District or Borough Council's Conservation and Design Officers as soon as possible of maintenance, repair and new highway schemes that are planned for conservation areas where they will affect the character and appearance. This should be no later than when the work is put into a provisional programme, and before any design or other consultations are carried out.
- Respond to consultations on enhancement schemes and ideas put forward by the County Planning Authority, District and Borough Councils.
- Adopt a flexible approach to the allocation of budgets and when requested, either to delay or bring forward schemes in programmes.
- Provide technical advice.
- Adopt completed schemes where they are carried out in accordance with County Council specifications.
- As resources permit, use specifications and materials appropriate to conservation areas and consider contributing to the extra cost of these.
- Co-ordinate all works carried out on the highway under The New Roads and Street Works Act.

- Ensure that Statutory Undertakers and other organisations carry out reinstatement and other works to an appropriate standard.

1.2.2 Role of the County Council as Planning Authority

- Keep the County Highway Authority updated on newly designated conservation areas or changes in the boundaries of existing ones.
- Advise the County Highway Authority, as appropriate, on changes in Structure Plan, Local Plans and other planning documents, and any new or altered legislation.
- Advise the County Highway Authority on whether proposals will affect the character and appearance of conservation areas.
- Advise the County Highway Authority, District and Borough Councils on design and use of materials including the consideration of the implications of Local Agenda 21.
- Liaise with other sections of the Environment and Transport Department of the County Council and other organisations involved with undertaking work in the highway.
- Encourage all parties concerned to adopt a flexible approach, help to secure extra funding from other sources, and, as resources permit, consider contributing financially to joint schemes.

1.2.3 Role of District & Borough Councils as Highway Agents

- Notify the District or Borough Council's Conservation and Design Officers as soon as possible of maintenance, repair, traffic signage and new lighting schemes that are planned for conservation areas where they will affect the character and appearance. This should be no later than when the work is put into a provisional programme and before any design or other consultations are carried out.

1.2.4 Role of District & Borough Councils as Planning Authorities

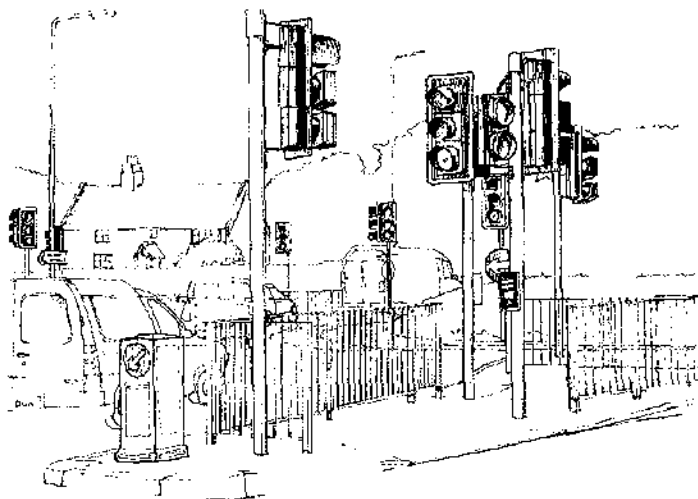
- To consult the Environment and Transport Department of the County Council on proposed new conservation areas or any changes to the boundaries of existing ones and notify the County Council of any new designations.
- Notify the Environment and Transport Department of the County Council on proposed enhancement schemes at an early stage. This should be before any design or other consultations are carried out.
- As agreed with the County Council, assist with consultation exercises, provide design and technical advice as necessary and ensure the satisfactory implementation of schemes on site.

- As resources permit, consider undertaking joint schemes by contributing financially.
- Help to secure extra funding from other organisations such as Town and Parish Councils, English Heritage and other funding bodies (See Section 1.3.5, Funding).
- Adopt a flexible approach to programming schemes and to the allocation of budgets.

1.2.5 Role of Town and Parish Authorities

- Assist the County Highway Authority in identifying problems relating to highway maintenance and safety.
- Assist the District Councils in identifying locations within conservation areas where it would be desirable to implement enhancement schemes.
- As agreed with the County and District Councils assist with consultation exercises and ensuring the satisfactory completion of schemes on site.
- Consider undertaking joint schemes by contributing financially.

Highway works in conservation areas -
traffic signs, lights and street furniture can have a major impact...



1.3 Design Process

First Principles

Agreed procedures should enable all parties involved or affected to be consulted at the appropriate time, and therefore contribute to the scheme. The procedures should also ensure that the maximum use is made of any resources that may be available.

This section, therefore, makes some suggestions which are aimed at achieving greater co-operation between the various parties involved.

1.3.1 Initial Contacts

Schemes are initiated for all sorts of reasons; these might be highway repairs, enhancement works or measures to improve highway safety. They could be promoted by the County Council, the District or Borough Council, Town or Parish Council or even some other organisation.

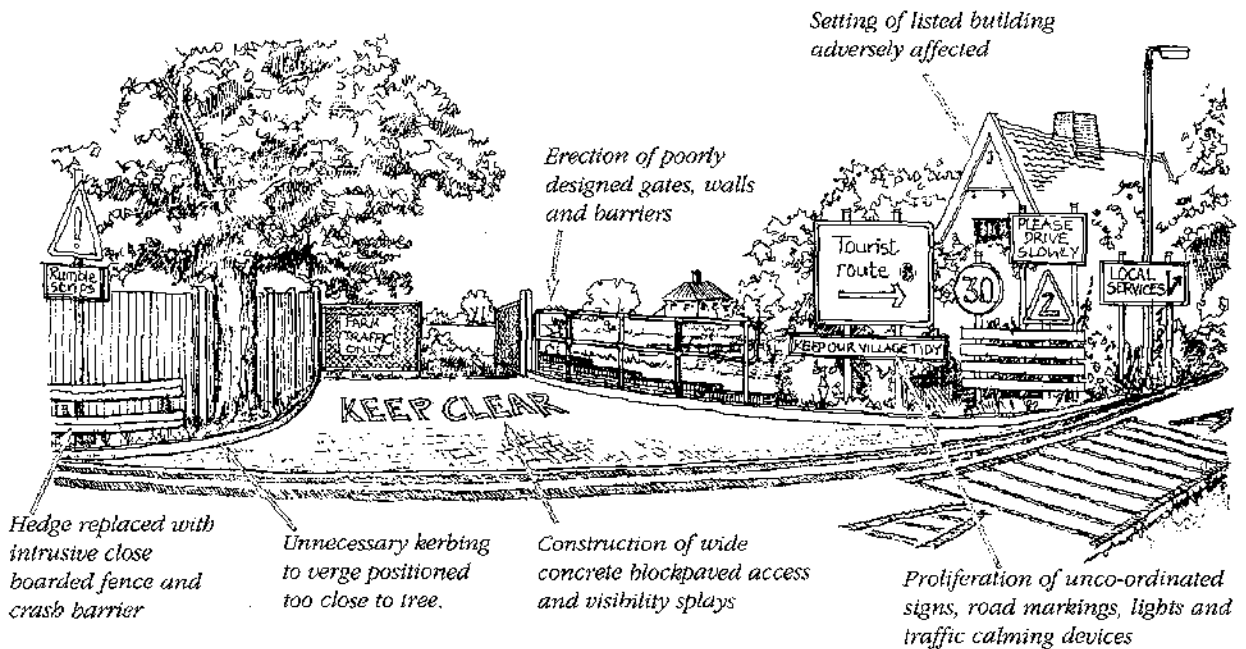
Whenever a District, Borough or the County Council initiates a scheme, or where they are being requested to consider or discuss a proposal by others, it is important that the other Authority is

informed as soon as possible. This will allow the professional expertise in both Authorities to highlight highway, conservation, urban design and landscape issues at the earliest stage. When meetings then take place with Town or Parish Councils, elected members and other interested or affected parties there will be a better understanding of the issues which need to be addressed.

At the County Council the first points of contact would normally be the Area Highway Managers (or their Agency equivalents) and the Development Manager in the Environment Division. At the District Councils, the Conservation and Design Officers in the Planning Departments should be informed.

At this stage the statutory undertakers should be informed of the scheme and given the opportunity to comment on its likely effect on operations and future plans.

For simple schemes informal discussion between relevant parties may be all that is necessary; in other cases, establishing a more formal working party of professional officers, Councillors and representatives of local interest groups may be an appropriate way forward.



The design process -

The cumulative impact of a number of unco-ordinated "improvements" can undermine the character and appearance of conservation areas... We don't do it like this in Suffolk!

1.3.2 Formulation of Brief

When it has been agreed that works are necessary, it will be important that a proper brief is prepared which lists all the factors which will need to be taken into account when design work is undertaken. Agreement should be reached on who will prepare and circulate a draft brief and who should be consulted on its contents. The brief should be endorsed by all those involved in progressing the project.

1.3.3 Preliminary Design Stage

Design work can be undertaken by either the County or District Councils depending upon the nature of the work and the type of scheme that is being developed. Officers in both Authorities may need to contribute to the design process. Therefore, it will be important to ensure that there is proper liaison.

Before design work commences an agreement should be reached on which officers from each Authority will be involved, what their roles will be and at what point they will be consulted. Preliminary ideas for the design of any scheme should be circulated to those officers for comment at an early stage.

At this point the need for obtaining any consents such as planning permission, conservation area consent, listed building consent or building regulation approval should be considered.



1.3.4 Public Consultations

Change and new development in Suffolk's Conservation Areas is invariably of interest to the general public so it is important that, whenever possible, public consultation takes place before schemes are finalised.

The extent and timing of consultations will be dependent upon the nature, size and sensitivity of the scheme and who is going to be implementing it. With most small schemes, for example those which are essentially maintenance work, it would be impractical and therefore inappropriate to engage in widespread consultations.

The type of consultation should be agreed between the parties involved in progressing the project. It could include staging an exhibition, producing leaflets and circulating questionnaires. The County Council, the District Council and the Town or Parish Council should be involved in the consultation exercises when major schemes are being proposed.

Consultation responses should be taken into account before any design solutions are finalised. The aim should be to achieve the implementation of the optimum scheme after proper consideration of all the factors that need to be taken into account.

In certain circumstances, it may be appropriate to implement a temporary experimental scheme before a decision is made.

Initial Contacts-

Left: Early discussions between professionals will ensure that highway, urban design and landscape issues are all properly considered.

Consultation -

Right: Public Consultation in action



1.3.5. Funding

Funding is of major importance in any project and needs to be borne in mind at all stages. While it may influence the scale and quality of a scheme, it should not wholly dictate the design solution. Work in conservation areas can be more expensive, but this may be necessary if they are to be preserved and enhanced.

In some cases, the budget is available at the start of the scheme, whereas in other cases the scheme may be designed before funding is in place. A different approach is likely to be needed in each case.

Funding Available at Start of Scheme

It is often necessary to seek funding before a scheme can be prepared. If this is the case, care must be taken to ensure the funding is realistic and can deliver a high quality scheme.

Once a budget has been allocated there will be a need during the design stage to carry out regular checks on the likely cost of the scheme. If funds are not sufficient, there are several options to consider:-

- postpone and attempt to secure extra funding;
- reduce the extent of the scheme;
- reduce the specification standards.

In all cases, the original aims and objectives of the scheme should not be forgotten.

Scheme Designed Before Budget in Place

It is preferable to prepare a scheme, seek approval for it, and then match the budget accordingly. This process often builds up commitment amongst all parties involved. It is important, however, not to raise expectations.

Partnership Funding and Funding from Other Sources

Most schemes need contributions from County, District, Town and Parish Councils if they are to be achieved. In addition to providing funding, it is desirable for these organisations to be flexible about when and how they make their funding available. For expensive schemes, spreading the funding over two or more financial years may be an option. Contributions can be in the form of design, capital, or supervision costs, or by agreeing to be responsible for future maintenance of work.

Other contributions should always be explored, these could be from private sources, sponsorship, statutory undertakers, English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund. In some highway safety schemes, the availability of Government funding will be dependent on the cost effectiveness in reducing accidents.

Grant offers and budget constraints may require the work to be undertaken and completed by specific dates, such as at the end of a financial year. These requirements must be balanced against other factors which may also influence the programming of the project.

In order for different authorities, organisations and statutory undertakers to work more closely together and thereby maximise funds, it will be essential for all annual programmes of work to be distributed to interested parties as early as possible so that partnership schemes can be identified, and finance from all those involved can be made available in good time.

Funding -

Financial contributions can come from a variety of sources, as was the case in Eye (left)

**EYE TOWN CENTRE
ENHANCEMENT SCHEME**

Suffolk County Council EYE TOWN COUNCIL

Mid Suffolk District Council Supported by the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Main Contractor:
SHIC SUFFOLK HIGHWAYS CONTRACTING
01473 831098

Mid Suffolk Engineering
ARCHITECTS
BUILDING SURVEYORS
ENGINEERS
PLANNING SERVICES
QUANTITY SURVEYORS

Suffolk County Council
Environment & Transport

**THIS PROJECT IS BEING PART-FUNDED
BY THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY
European Regional Development Fund**

1.4 Design Principles

1.4.1 Survey

- (a) Investigate the history of the site from all available sources.
- (b) Record existing materials and features (a detailed survey may be necessary).
- (d) Collect information on pedestrian and vehicular traffic volume and movements.
- (e) Check on local plan and other policy documents.
- (f) Consult users of space and other relevant parties.
- (g) Check on statutory undertakers' equipment.

1.4.2 Analysis

From the above information it is possible to identify:

- good/bad features
- problems that need resolving
- opportunities for and constraints to change

1.4.3 Outline Proposals

From this analysis of the current situation it is possible to identify what is generally required from the scheme.

Outline designs can be prepared and should consider:

- proposed use of spaces
- possible materials
- funding implications
- whether scheme is temporary, experimental or permanent

At this point proposals should be kept simple, flexible and give alternatives given. These ideas should form the basis of appropriate consultation.

Design Principles- *Proper surveys and careful analysis of problems and conflicts can go a long way to achieve successful schemes.*



Woodbridge Thoroughfare before and after improvements were carried out



Ballingdon Street, Sudbury, before and after the enhancement scheme

I.4.4 Design Solutions

If the principles of the outline proposals are accepted, then the final design should follow as a refinement, taking into account the issues raised during the consultation process.

The following points should be remembered:

- (a) original objectives;
- (b) keep the scheme simple;
- (c) design it for the location;
- (d) spaces should be functional and easily understood; and
- (e) make sure the scheme works as well as ensuring it looks good.

The scheme may be a compromise but it should always be the optimum solution. Some general rules must be followed:

- (i) Make sure it is safe for all users.
- (ii) Consider the objectives of Local Agenda 21 in providing for and encouraging cyclists, pedestrians and users of public transport.
- (iii) Consider the requirements of those with special needs.
- (iv) Choose materials, street furniture and planting to ensure consistency throughout the conservation area and reflect other LA21 objectives including recycling and the use of local materials and suppliers wherever possible.
- (v) Consider traffic management as part of an overall integrated solution.
- (vi) Design and construct the scheme to an appropriate technical standard.
- (vii) Consider drainage implications.
- (viii) Consider maintenance implications.
- (ix) Agree future maintenance responsibilities.

Design solutions -

*Conservation area enhancement schemes at
Lavenham (top)
Kersey (middle)
Long Melford (bottom)*



1.5 Implementation

Implementing work on site is a highly complex part of the process and all aspects must be carefully considered. It is this proper implementation of a scheme with attention to detail which make it a success or failure.

Work carried out in a public area is usually of great interest to local people and other users. There is inevitable disruption and this must be kept to a minimum. The resulting scheme must be seen to be worth this disruption.

The relationship with the public will be helped by the earlier consultation process and by keeping them fully informed during the period of construction. Problems should be dealt with constructively and promptly.

Those supervising the work must ensure that there is sufficient control within the contract such that the contractor works in a considerate way.

The technical aspects of implementation are dealt with in Appendix B and examples of completed schemes comprise Appendix E of this document.

Design solutions- Schemes should...



be simple (Bury St Edmunds)



be designed for the location (Clare)



be accessible to all users (Bury St Edmunds)



be safe (Woodbridge)



be suitable for those with special needs (Bury St Edmunds)



and look good (Beccles)