



Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils

Conservation Area Management Plan Toolkit Guidance Note



Introduction to the Guidance Notes

These guidance notes are provided in order to assist the completion of the Conservation Area Management Plan Toolkit. The guidance included detailed definitions and explanations of terminology which is used within the Conservation Area Management Plan Toolkit questions and will provide prompt's when using the questionnaires.

Spaces

'A space is generally defined as being the gap between the built elements or landscape features and can include streets, public squares, gardens, park and green spaces'

Formal or Informal Spaces

These could be spaces such as town squares, market squares or village greens. It could also be the width of roads and the situation of houses. Focal points, such as a place 'where paths cross' and people might meet, stop and carry on a conservation can be an example of an informal space.



Edges and Boundaries

Edges and boundaries or means of enclosure can be defined as anything that encloses a space. Means of enclosure can include walls, timber fencing, metal railings and other fencing types and hedges, which can come in different styles and materials and can be specific to a certain area. In some instances, fronts of building face directly onto the street and there is no front garden, whilst in other instances buildings are set back from the highway.



Building Plots

A building plot refers to the land in which a building sits within. Building plots can vary greatly depending on the location of the dwelling, some dwellings will be detached and have surrounding garden and thus are situated on a larger plot, these are often found further away from a town core. The width of plots are important and help the buildings present to the street in a certain manner.



Wide or Open Spaces

Wide or open spaces may be areas such as boulevards and greenspaces. Spaces may be private but still make an important contribution to the wider street scene. Spaces may be broken into sections however they still have the overall character of a wide airy space.



Narrow or Enclosed Spaces

Narrow or Enclosed spaces are usually formed by a confined space between building lines. The height of buildings is important and if the buildings are too tall for the width of the street, the street can appear too enclosed. A continuous building line emphasises the enclosure as well as height or shadows. A narrow or enclosed space is not just a space between buildings, these spaces can be more substantial and may be an intentional part of an historic design or the result of pressure for development of available land.



Uses and activity

'Buildings can have a variety of different uses, whether this is residential meaning someone lives there, or they can be retail, places of worship or community buildings. The uses of buildings can change over time as well as the activity level associated with that use'

Road and paving materials

Road and pavement surfaces may form a significant proportion of an area and therefore have the ability to have a large impact on its character depending on the type and condition. The materials for street paving can greatly vary depending on location and age. Paving could be made of flexible asphalt surfacing which is common in many newer developments, this is a concrete type of surface and is used in the majority of footways and cycle tracks that have been recently introduced. Asphalt concrete may be coloured in order to show cycle lanes across the mouth of junctions or alongside on-street parking. Surface paving may also consist of concrete block paving which can be red, charcoal, buff, brindle-type and natural. Unbound surfacing materials are often used on public rights of way, bridleways and independent footways and shared paths. Some more significant areas such as neighbourhood squares and local centres as well as conservation areas may use granite setts, Yorkshire paving or cobbles.



Street furniture

Street furniture has the ability to enhance or detract from the character, quality and appearance of an area. Street furniture can include pedestrian guardrails, cycle parking, bus stops and shelters. Bus stop and shelters are an important feature in the street scene and are part of the user experience. Seating such as metal or wooden benches as well as bollards, which can be made of metal or wood, electric charging points, litter and refuse bins, public art and lighting can all form parts of street furniture.



Impact of traffic, vehicles and parking

Traffic and the movement of vehicles through a place and parking of vehicles can impact greatly on the way a place is perceived and the surrounding environment. Car dominated environments can have a negative impact on people using other modes of transport such as by bike or on foot, furthermore it can have a detrimental impact on the landscape character of a place. Vehicles may be parked on street, in designated car parks or on private driveways. Furthermore, traffic within a space can also include cyclists, horse riders and motor cyclists.



Usability and accessibility of the space

Different areas are easier to use than other due to access in the area. Road surfaces might preclude access to certain users such as wheelchairs, prams or cycles, whilst obstacles such as cycles locked to railings, pedestrian guardrails, advertising and street signs can hinder the ability to easily use pavements.

Fronts and Backs

Streets should be defined by the fronts of plots with buildings orientated to face the public highway, space or private street space. Principal access to the dwelling should face the main public highway, with access being frequent in order to create an active frontage.



Buildings

'A building is any human-made structure used or intended for supporting or sheltering any use or occupancy. The variety of buildings and forms as well as the materials used in their construction, their finer details, their use and their relationship with each other can have a significant effect on the character of the area'

Contribution of buildings to the space

The design of a building has the ability to provide visual richness in the form and detail, which is proportionate to the size of the building as a whole. Buildings can make a contribution through individuality and variation, responding to local points, gateways and pinch points. Furthermore collectives of buildings can have group value due to the uniformity of design. The contribution of a building to a space may be increased due to a historic importance connected to a specific building or group of buildings, increasing significance through associated value.



Size and Scale

The size and scale of a building can reveal its former purpose and also the type of people who lived there, as well as reflecting the history of the area.

How many storeys do the houses typically have?

Do any of the houses have dormer windows within their roof?

Are there any narrow-terraced houses or is there wider semi-detached or detached dwellings?

Are there any flats?

There should be a clear hierarchy of routes, and it should be easy to identify a primary streets from secondary and tertiary.



Age

The general age of the buildings can be judged by the materials it is made from and construction techniques used and can also be judged based on the surrounding buildings. Some buildings have been altered significantly overtime and therefore have a combination of elements from different ages.

The location of a building and its relationship with neighbouring structures can also help to identify the age of the building as well as the material that buildings are made from.



Materials

Within different areas, different building materials can be more prominent, depending upon the materials that were available at the time of building.

Materials can include a prominent building material, such as brick or timber framing, or a wide ranging palette of materials which contribute to creating a diverse streetscape.

Some materials do not compliment the wider streetscape or the surrounding dwellings and therefore can make the dwelling stand out and may detract from the local character.



Windows

Windows are often identified as the 'eyes' of the building, due to the fact they let in light and give views out, and make a significant contribution to the building's appearance.

Do the windows appear to be original or traditional windows?

What material do the windows appear to be made out of? Are they timber, UPVC, metal or stone?

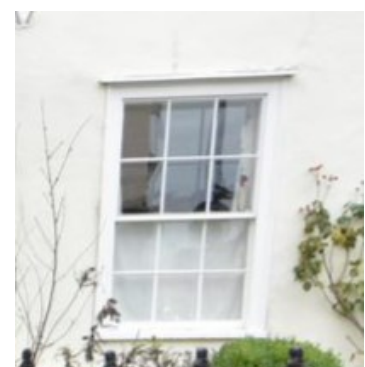
Are the windows all uniform or are they varied styles?

Are there any traditional shopfronts or do they appear to be modern replacement?

The main window types within the area are:

Sash Window- Frames that slide up and down

Casement - Hinged windows that open outwards



Doors

Doors and door cases can contribute to the special interest of the building due to their age, design or traditional role.

Original doors may have been lost or replaced overtime and replaced with doors of inappropriate material or design. The contribution that the door makes within the street scene can depend on the use, age, location, design and possible grouping of buildings as well as the relationship between the building and the road.

If a building forms part of a larger group of buildings that have relatively little change and are not unaltered, an unsympathetic door will be highly prominent.

If a building is situated close to the pavement of to a highway, an inappropriate door will also have more if an impact upon the street scene. Even doors on buildings sited further back from the highway can have a positive contribution to the buildings significance.



Use of Buildings

'The use of buildings can change over time, and there are often historic clues as to what the building has been used as in the past, as well as documentation and historic photographs that show the evolution of the building.

Use of buildings can include commercial, retail, academic, residential, or a mix of uses, with certain uses positively contributing to the character of the area.'

Has the building been altered?

Buildings are often extended and altered overtime in order to meet the needs of the occupier. Some alterations are not immediately visible, such as the re-rendering buildings, however some alterations are much more obvious and can have an impact on the building itself and the street scene as a whole.

Normally, it is easy to identify replacement windows, especially if they are of modern material, and of different size and style to those in neighbouring properties.



Condition

Condition of buildings can vary greatly and can be greatly influenced by if the property is vacant or not. Well maintained buildings usually make a more positive contribution to the character of the area rather than rundown and poorly maintained properties.



Views

'Views in to, out of and within a space are an important element of the character of an area. All spaces have a view through the form and combination varies from space to space. Often it is a cumulative combination of views that influence the character of a space rather than a single defining vista.'

Historic / Popular Views

Historic and popular views and vistas can make an important contribution to the surrounding environment. These views could include prominent landmarks such as churches or town halls, open countryside or designated green spaces, or over watercourses.



Form of View: Short or Long, unfolding, glimpsed, channelled or wide open

The type of view is also important, whether it is glimpsed between houses, or channelled down by streets. Buildings can align streets to frame the view which is seen along the line of the street. Open spaces and green spaces can be placed to allow a view out between the buildings, or can take advantage of slopes to allow views over the tops of buildings. Important vistas normally have an object stopping the view, with the longer the vista the more important the building is likely to be. Views down both long and short street should not be terminated by garages, parking, storage, service entrances, backs of building or substations.



Focal Points

A focal point is a feature that draws attention by the nature of its scale, design, location or prominence. Focal points can dominate a view however they do not always represent the end of a space with views continuing on in the background. These type of focal points could be church steeples, town halls, bridges and other large dominating structures or landscapes.



Streetscape

A streetscape is made up of the visual elements of a street that combine to form the street's character. This view will take into account the overall style and scale of buildings, as well as materials, architectural features, street furniture, trees and greenery, and how well these elements work together.



Roofscape

The landscape of roofs can have a significant impact on the character of a street. Some roofs may be visible from street level and can be formed of a variety of materials and shapes, or similar materials that create a cohesion between the buildings. Chimneys may be designed differently and be of different ages and forming a key architectural feature or may have been removed entirely.



Landscape

'The distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occur in a particular space. This reflects particular combinations of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use and human settlement.'

Leafy and green

Vegetation, and tree and hedging may offer screening in the summer months but in winter it may be possible to gain different views through the canopies of trees when leaves fall. The time of year therefore may have an influence on the impact of the trees. There may be area which have prevalent green and leafy qualities, or there may be some areas where key trees or groups of trees make a significant contribution.



Hard urban landscape

Hard urban areas may be where trees and other forms of greenery may make very little or no contribution to the overall character of a place, whilst not necessarily detracting from the character of the area.



Public private greenery

Green character is not only formed by public green spaces or trees planted, as trees and green spaces within private spaces such as residential garden, school fields, and church grounds which can also add to the public character of an area.

Water and Blue Space

Water can form an important part of a landscape or focal part. This can take the form of a river, the sea, lake or pond, and can form part of the setting to the space and can impact upon the character.



Topography

Topography is the arrangement of natural and artificial physical features of an area. This can include land that is flat or a hill or it can be a combination of levels.

