

Macclesfield Town Centre Conservation Area Management Plan

Draft for public consultation October 2021

Introduction

A conservation area is ‘an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’ as set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (Section 69). When dealing with planning applications in conservation areas Cheshire East Council is required to ensure that ‘special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area’ (Section 72). Also, Cheshire East Council has a duty ‘from time to time to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas’ (Section 71). The 1990 Act (as amended by the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act (2013)) prevents the demolition of buildings in conservation areas without planning permission and allows for the service of Urgent Works Notices for vacant buildings in a similar way to those for listed buildings. This Management Plan is an example of the sort of proposal envisaged in Section 71.

The sections of the 1990 Act form the foundation for Cheshire East Council to help manage the built environment in such a way as to retain the special qualities of conservation areas. There are, however, a wide range of other pieces of legislation, national guidance and local policy which assist in this task. They deal with other types of heritage assets, such as listed buildings, additional controls to supplement those included in the 1990 Act (often called Article 4 Directions), various types of repair and enforcement notices, and advice on how to assess the impact of development on the setting of an area or building and many other related topics.

Consequently, it is important that this document is not read in isolation from additional guidance and policy documents. Where applicable, links to the documents have been listed in the relevant policy sections below to provide additional guidance.

The following set of management aims are based upon the understanding of the conservation area outlined in the Appraisal, most critically the negative features and opportunities for enhancement identified in Section 9. They seek to provide guidance in determining planning applications for development, but also to building owners and developers when preparing development proposals.

It is essential that any Management Plan supports a modern community and is considerate of both social and economic factors. Conservation areas are not frozen entities and should not be seen in isolation from their surrounding context. Therefore, it is essential that these policies remain flexible and are reviewed and monitored on a regular basis to ensure that they remain relevant to the changing ambitions, issues and priorities of Macclesfield Town and Cheshire East Councils and the people who live in, work in and visit the town, as well as the conservation area’s contribution to the broader context of Macclesfield and Cheshire East.

The principal aim of the following policies is the preservation and enhancement of the character and appearance of the conservation area through the protection and improvement of existing buildings and townscape features which make a positive contribution and the introduction of good quality, contemporary design. There is also a presumption against demolition, except where buildings have been identified as having a negative impact on the conservation area.

There will be some cases of overlap between this Management Plan and existing policy documents and guidance. It is not the remit of this document to address those matters associated with the wider management of items such as parking, housing or crime.

Each set of management policies is prefaced by a series of aims which sets out the overarching strategic principles that form the basis of the management policies. Recommendations have also been included where additional guidance on management processes could be adopted to further support the preservation and enhancement of the conservation area.

Through the understanding of the Macclesfield Town Centre Conservation Area provided in the Appraisal it is clear that there are a number of key objectives that, if implemented, would contribute to achieving the following key ambitions:

- Understand the significance of the conservation area and enhance its character and appearance;
- Stimulate local interest in both the protection of and careful development of the conservation area for present and future generations;
- Encourage the conservation, repair, reuse and management of the area's historic features;
- Engage with and encourage owners of properties within the conservation area in respect of repair and reuse
- Support the economic and social prosperity of Macclesfield town centre
- Encourage wider use and enjoyment of assets within Macclesfield town centre;

- Stimulate interest in the provision of public amenity space in the town centre.

The following aims and recommendations therefore include opportunities for both long-term and short-term change which cumulatively would secure the following three key objectives:

- A. Enhancement**
- B. Regeneration**
- C. Community Engagement**

Enhancement

A.1 Repair and Maintenance of Heritage Assets

Aim: Where possible reverse the cumulative negative impact that alterations and the poor upkeep and maintenance of buildings has had on their appearance and the character of the conservation area.

A.1a

Buildings should aim to be maintained on a regular basis. This should include the following:

- Re-painting of window, door and shopfront joinery;
- General minor repairs to fenestration, including replacement of glazing where necessary;
- Re-painting and/or re-rendering of façades;
- Repointing;
- Removal of debris from gutters;
- Removal of redundant fixtures and fittings;
- Repairs, including repair of missing or slipped roof slates to prevent water ingress.

A1.b Historic boundary and retaining walls should be maintained and repaired to ensure their structural stability.

A.1c

Repairs should be made on a like for like basis for the architectural period. Salvage and existing materials should be used as far as possible; unpainted external walls such as stone or brick should not be painted or rendered.

A.1d When applications for works to historic buildings are proposed it will be expected that poor-quality modern windows and doors are replaced with timber windows and doors following the historic fenestration pattern.

A.1e When applications for works to buildings are proposed it will be expected that ventilation ducts, air-conditioning units, security equipment and wiring will be relocated to more discreet locations and redundant services/wiring removed. Applications for future proposals must take into consideration the impact such equipment has on the appearance of buildings and the conservation area.

A.1f Enforcement action, will be pursued

where it can be demonstrated that it is expedient to do so.

Recommendation A.1i Macclesfield

Town Council could produce an information sheet for the conservation area and highlight through social media channels and website the need for sympathetic alterations.

Further Guidance Links:

Historic England online guidance: Looking after Historic Buildings
<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/buildings/>

A.2 Shopfronts, Retail Frontage and Signage

Aim: To better connect the retail frontage with the historic façades above, celebrating the architectural quality of Macclesfield and uplifting people's experience and the perceived quality of the urban environment in order to enhance its character and appearance.

A.2a New shopfronts to be in-keeping with the character and appearance of the host building and relate satisfactorily to the design of the upper parts of the facade.

A.2b New shopfronts within historic buildings Should retain elements that contribute to the traditional character of the building including historic corbels, pilasters, fascias and stallrisers, or seek to reinstate them where missing [See accompanying diagram]. Size, scale, elaborate or simple design and detailing, the use of correct materials and colour schemes are all important in ensuring a sympathetic design.

A.2c sensitively designed signage and integrated into the shopfront and streetscene.

A.2d Signage should relate to its character, scale and architectural features.

A.2e Internally illuminated signage is not appropriate .

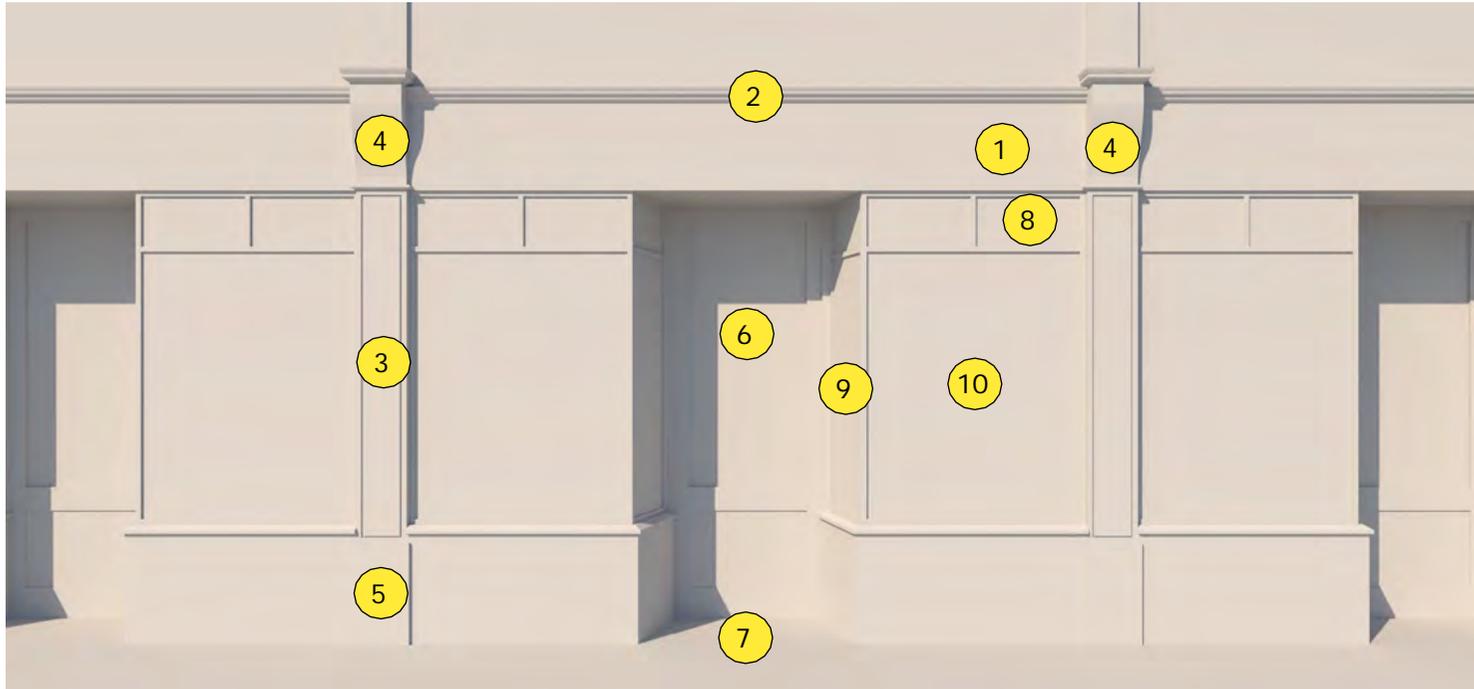
A.2f Where there is more than one business operating in a single building , sensitive solutions to minimise the impact of the signage should be developed.

A.2g The location of signage on non-retail buildings must be carefully considered so as to not harm the appearance of the building.

A.2h When applications for works to buildings are proposed it will be expected that detracting elements of shopfronts and signage will be removed. Enforcement action will be taken where it is expedient to do so.

A.2i Shop security is a fundamental design process not a secondary consideration. Standard roller shutter solutions should be avoided. Glass can be functional and aesthetic

Glass (toughened and laminated) can also perform an acceptable security function as an alternative to roller shutters. Internal lattice grilles would be acceptable alternatives. Security solutions should aim to create an attractive and welcoming street scene



- ① Fascia
- ② Cornice
- ③ Pilaster
- ④ Console
- ⑤ Plinth
- ⑥ Door
- ⑦ Door recess
- ⑧ Fanlight (or transom light)
- ⑨ Mullion
- ⑩ mGlazing

Recommendation A.2i

Positively manage the negative aspects of the conservation area roller shutters and signage, including serving discontinuance notices for advertising which benefit from deemed consent.

Recommendation A.2ii When

determining applications by national retailers ,sympathetic shopfronts and branding rather than accepting standard corporate designs should be adopted. .

Recommendation A.2iii It is recommended that Macclesfield Town Council engages with commercial owners to promote the benefit of heritage led alterations through means such as producing an information sheet and sharing best practice examples which could be highlighted on social media, websites and noticeboards.

Further Guidance Links:

National Advertisement Guidance (March 2014)
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/advertisements>



A.3 Vacant Heritage Assets and Sites

Aim: To secure the viable reuse of vacant heritage assets and sites to prevent decay and dereliction and ensure their long-term preservation and contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

A.3f Proposals which enliven the frontage of vacant buildings and sites such as public art should be actively pursued as a means of engaging the local community with their built heritage.

A.a Proposals for the use of vacant upper floors would be welcomed subject to an assessment of any associated alterations.

A.3h New development schemes within and around the conservation area should consider how they can introduce new uses into the town centre to support its vitality and, where possible, the provision of public amenity space.

A.3b Short-term temporary uses should be sought for vacant buildings and sites which would engage the local community with the conservation area.

A.3c Proposals for parking in backland areas will not be acceptable where they will cause harm to the setting of the buildings and character of the conservation area.



Further Guidance Links:

Vacant Historic Buildings: Guidelines of Managing Risks (Historic England, updated 2018)

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/vacanthistoricbuildings/heaq183-vacant-historic-buildings/>

Stopping the Rot: A Guide to Enforcement Action to Save Historic Buildings (Historic England, updated 2016)

<https://content.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/stoppingtherot/heaq046b-stopping-the-rot.pdf/>

Regeneration

B.1 Demolition

Aim: To ensure the significance of the conservation area is preserved and that any future development enhances its positive characteristics where possible .

B.1a Any replacement buildings must complement the character and appearance of the conservation area and the setting of heritage assets.

B.1b New buildings must be fully accessible and provide an active frontage where they address the streetscene to ensure that ‘dead’ frontages are not created which would impact detrimentally on the conservation area.

Recommendation B.1i
consider opportunities to enhance the character of the conservation area and its setting as part of future regeneration initiatives through the provision of solutions to address buildings and sites which are identified as making a negative contribution to the conservation area and to support the reuse of vacant heritage assets.

Further Guidance Links:

National Planning Policy Framework (updated 2019)
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/740441/National_Planning_Policy_Framework_web_accessible_version.pdf

National Planning Practice Guidance (updated 2019)
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/conserving-and-enhancing-the-historic-environment>



B.2 Development

Aim: To ensure that only applications for development which reflect careful consideration of the character and appearance of the conservation area are approved, and to encourage the redevelopment of vacant sites within the conservation area and its setting.

B.2a All new development must be of high quality. It should respect the character and appearance of the conservation area and should be of appropriate scale, density, height, form, massing, layout, plot position, materials, colours, composition and detailed design.

B.2b Exemplary modern design is encouraged where it is well-designed, of an appropriate scale, using good quality appropriate materials and carefully considered to respond to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Imitation of earlier styles is not encouraged.

B.2c Original building plots, where their relationship with the pattern of development and other plots makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area, should be retained or reinstated.

B.2d The change of use of buildings should include careful consideration of the consequent physical changes required, among others, to provide delivery access, parking, external services, such as condensing units and obscuring active street frontages.

B.2e Changes that have a detrimental impact on the conservation area will not be permitted; the cumulative impact of the loss of existing uses must be taken into consideration.

B.2f New extensions must have regard to the character and appearance of the principal building. They must be of an appropriate design, mass, scale, height, colour, material, layout and form to ensure that they are subservient to the original building and that it is not obscured or overdeveloped. In the case of roof extensions they must not disrupt uniform rooflines or visually intrude into surrounding views.

B.2g Development proposals must protect existing street patterns, open spaces, walls, railings, materials and other elements that are an integral part of the conservation area.

Recommendation B.2i Cheshire East Council, in consultation with Macclesfield Town Council, should consider opportunities to redevelop vacant sites within the conservation area and its setting - working with private owners as required.

Recommendation B2ii
Macclesfield Town Council could make an assessment of the surface level parking and vacant sites within the town centre, both public and private, with



consideration given to alternative uses or developments which would enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area - working with private owners as required.

Further Guidance Links:

National Planning Policy Framework (updated 2019)
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/740441/National_Planning_Policy_Framework_web_accessible_version.pdf

National Planning Practice Guidance (updated 2019)
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/conserving-and-enhancing-the-historic-environment>

B.3 Views and Setting

Aim: To protect the established and valued views of the surrounding area which contribute to the historic context and setting of Macclesfield Town Centre Conservation Area, as well as local views within the conservation area.

B.3a Any future development within the setting of the conservation area must preserve (or better reveal) those elements of its setting that make a positive contribution to its overall character.

B.3b Development within or outside of the conservation area which would harmfully intrude into the views identified in the Appraisal and cause harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area overall will not be permitted.

B.3c Development within the setting of St Michael's Church must preserve its significance and respect its important townscape role in forming the peak of the conservation area.

B.3d Verified views may be requested by Cheshire East Council in support of applications for redevelopment to impartially show the impact on the setting of the conservation area and its views.

Recommendation B.3i

a review of Waters

Green aimed at reducing the dominance of cars and car parking and improving the pedestrian experience - including access from the station - and sense of arrival into the conservation area.

Further Guidance Links:

The Setting of Heritage Assets: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Historic England, updated 2017)
<https://content.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/gpa3-setting-of-heritage-assets/heag180-gpa3-setting-heritage-assets.pdf/>

B.4 Public Realm

Aim: To ensure new interventions in the public realm are considered carefully in the context of good surviving examples of street furniture and surface coverings to preserve and enhance its essential character and to encourage the introduction of appropriate greening and landscaping.

B.4a Proposals for additional street trees and planting need to be carefully considered and not be positioned so as to obscure positive buildings or block views.

B.4b Options for additional green spaces in which to sit and dwell should be considered as part of future redevelopments within the conservation area or its setting.

B.4c New street furniture should be carefully placed so as to not lead to the build-up of street clutter. It must be of a suitable standard of design, accord with the patterns of items already in use and generally be sited so as to be visually unobtrusive, having regard to the character and quality of the existing townscape.

B.4d Existing street signage should be consolidated and new signage carefully placed so as to not lead to the build-up of street clutter, having regard to the character and quality of the existing townscape.

B.4e Opportunities for public art which reinforces the identity of the conservation area should be pursued as part of redevelopment proposals.

B.4f Suitable paving materials should be used in all areas, including new developments, and existing historic and sympathetic modern coverings must be preserved.

B.4g New interventions into the public realm should consider the needs of those with mobility problems, pushchair use and disabilities.

Recommendation B.4i

Chestergate and Jordangate / Unicorn Way pavements with traditional pavers and setts and the pedestrian access across Churchill Way improved.



Recommendation B.4ii Cheshire East Council, in consultation with Macclesfield Town Council and the Town Centre Regeneration working group, should undertake a review of the pedestrianised area for potential extension and/or increased hours to allow Market Place to become a more meaningful amenity space.

Recommendation B.4iii Cheshire East Council, in consultation with Macclesfield Town Council, should consider the provision of enhanced lighting in areas such as 108 Steps, Step Hill and Brunswick Hill without compromising their historic character.

Recommendation B.4iv Heritage street signs should be utilised for wayfinding to local amenities.

Recommendation B.4v It is recommended that Cheshire East Council, in consultation with Macclesfield Town Council, make an assessment of the surface level parking and vacant sites within the town centre, both public and private, with consideration given to their potential to be ‘greened’ or provide public amenity space. In the case of vacant sites this could be on a temporary basis in advance of their redevelopment.

Recommendation B.4vi Cheshire East Council, in consultation with Macclesfield Town Council, should undertake a scheme of enhancement of the pocket amenity spaces on Jordangate and Chestergate/Churchill Way whilst the Gardens to the rear of the Town Hall should be better promoted as an amenity space.

Recommendation B.4vii Opportunities for rewilding and encouraging habitats on the hill slopes should be considered by Cheshire East Council with support from Macclesfield Town Council Rangers, such as to the area immediately to the east of Sparrow Park.



Community Engagement

C.1 Identity

Aim: To give the conservation area a clear identity, engage the public and celebrate the heritage of Macclesfield whilst incentivising the care and conservation of its buildings and character and appearance overall.

C.1a The full interactive Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan will be made available on the council's website and in interactive format to encourage its use.

C.1b Macclesfield Town Council will continue to engage with stakeholders through the Town Centre Manager to deepen their understanding of the significance of the conservation area, the social and economic benefits of heritage-led development and invite their input into how its character and appearance can be enhanced.

C.1c Public art should be explored as a means of engagement; enlivening the conservation area and defining Macclesfield identity.

Recommendation C.1i Cheshire East Council, in consultation with Macclesfield Town Council, should work with stakeholders to develop proposals to engage the community with the conservation area and its heritage assets, using the CAAMP as a tool.

Recommendation C.1ii Cheshire East Council and Macclesfield Town Councils should work with schools to better promote the value of the built heritage of Macclesfield as an educational resource and utilising the Appraisal document as a tool.

Recommendation C.1iii Cheshire East Council and Macclesfield Town Councils should consider how the Town Hall can better serve the local community to become a more accessible and engaged with building.

Recommendation C.1iv It is recommended that a Councillor at Macclesfield Town Council takes on the role of heritage champion.



C.2 Well-being

Aim: To create a place that people find welcoming and which contributes to their sense of identity, local pride and well-being.

C.2a Proposals which reinforce Macclesfield's identity and the character and appearance of the conservation area will be welcomed.

C.2b Redevelopment proposals must take into account the spaces around buildings and their potential to be uplifted.

C.2b Proposals which introduce short-term temporary uses into vacant buildings and sites that are focused on community engagement and well-being will be welcomed.

Recommendation C.2i Macclesfield Town Council should work with stakeholders to develop proposals to engage the community with the conservation area and its heritage assets including heritage walks / talks etc as well as promoting items of local interest through social media channels. How the heritage of the town can be plugged into wider social and well-being projects should also be explored.

Further Guidance Links:

Heritage Counts (Historic England, updated 2018)
<https://historicengland.org.uk/research/heritage-counts/>



Management

D.1 Adoption and Enforcement

Aim: To ensure that the conservation area is correctly managed and the tools available to Cheshire East Council are used to effectively enforce the conservation area status.

D.1a Building owners are responsible for ensuring the appropriate consents are in place before undertaking any changes to their property including, but not limited to, planning permission, listed building consent and advertisement consent.

D.1b Cheshire East Council will investigate unauthorised development and take necessary action to ensure compliance with national and local policy, including the management principles set out above.

D.1c Utilising the Gazetteer as a record of every building in the conservation area, Cheshire East Council will actively pursue unlawful works where it is expedient to do so.

D.1d Macclesfield Town Council will undertake a regular review of this Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, updating policy as required ensuring the plan remains a useful, relevant working document. A full review should be undertaken within three years of adoption and every five years thereafter.

Further Guidance Links:

Stopping the Rot: A Guide to Enforcement Action to Save Historic Buildings (Historic England, updated 2016)

<https://content.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/stoppingtherot/heag046b-stopping-the-rot.pdf/>

D.2 Additional Powers

Aim: Cheshire East Council seeks to make best use of the powers available to it to secure the enhancement of the conservation area.

D.2a Macclesfield Town and Cheshire East Councils will actively pursue relevant heritage funding streams including Partnership Schemes in Conservation Areas (PSICA) and Heritage Action Zones (HAZ) to secure funding.

D.2b Cheshire East Council will consider the use of additional planning powers including enforcement action and introducing Local Development Orders where it is expedient to do so.

Further Guidance Links:

Partnership Schemes in Conservation Areas (Historic England)
<https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/grants/our-grant-schemes/partnership-schemes-in-conservation-areas/>

Breathe New Life into an Old Place - Make It a Heritage Action Zone (Historic England)
<https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/heritage-action-zones/breathe-new-life-into-old-places-through-heritage-action-zones/>

National Lottery Grants for Heritage
<https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/national-lottery-grant-heritage>

Future High Streets Fund
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/future-high-streets-fund-call-for-proposals>