



**MANAGEMENT OF CONSERVATION AREAS TASK GROUP**

**REVIEW OF THE MANAGEMENT OF WATFORD BOROUGH  
COUNCIL'S CONSERVATION AREAS**

**FEBRUARY 2016**



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## COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

### Watford Borough Council

#### Members – Task Group

Councillor Rabi Martins	Chair, Councillor for Central Ward
Councillor Karen Collett	Councillor for Woodside Ward
Councillor Michael Haley	Councillor for Central Ward
Councillor Anne Joynes	Councillor for Leggatts Ward
Councillor Linda Topping	Councillor for Nascot Ward

#### Other Members attending or contributing

Councillor Iain Sharpe	Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Development
Councillor Mark Watkin	Councillor for Nascot Ward and Heritage Champion

### Officer Support

#### Watford Borough Council

Jane Custance	Head of Regeneration and Development
Robert Della-Sala	Head of Revenue and Benefits
Fiona Dunning	Interim Development Management Section Head
Sian Finney-MacDonald	Urban Design and Conservation Manager
Sally Ann Fuller	Senior Planner (temporary)
Lisa Searle	Enforcement Officer
Stephanie Waldron	Enforcement Officer, Planning
Simon Went	Senior Planner, Conservation
Sandra Hancock	Committee and Scrutiny Officer
Ishbel Morren	Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer



## **PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS TO PRESENT TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **Proposed recommendations**

The Task Group is looking to establish a small number of core recommendations.

### **COMMUNICATION**

**The aim of these recommendations is to improve public awareness of Watford's conservation areas:**

1. Include information about conservation areas in annual council tax and business rate notices for properties with postcodes in these areas.
2. Introduce a symbol on lamp columns or existing street furniture to show that the street or neighbourhood is in a designated conservation area.
3. Improve access to comprehensive information about conservation areas on Watford Borough Council's website, including guidance to residents about living or owning property there.
4. Encourage Councillors to play an active role in raising awareness of conservation areas, for example through public meetings, promoting local history projects, arranging for officers to speak at local meetings etc.
5. Consider alternative ways to engage with residents and businesses about the need for planning permissions for certain alterations in conservation areas. This might include utilising social media to sign-post them to the Council's website for comprehensive information.

### **LEGISLATION, COUNCIL POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

**The aim of these recommendations is to ensure that local planning rules affecting conservation areas reflect new technologies and other initiatives or legislation:**

6. Review current Article 4 directions to reflect changes in the General Permitted Development Orders and consider whether other classes should be included.
7. Ensure that procedures remain in place to undertake regular reviews of Watford Borough Council's Article 4 directions in order to address the potential impact of changes in technology or legislation.
8. Continue with the regular review of Watford Borough Council's toolkit of documents to ensure that these remain relevant.

9. Ensure that Watford Borough Council's development management officers continue to consult with the conservation and policy team when considering applications adjacent to conservation areas, in order to minimise the impact of new developments on properties within those areas.

## **COUNCIL RESOURCES**

**The Task Group acknowledges the excellent work that has been undertaken by officers in Watford's conservation areas and considers that it is important to continue this good work:**

10. Continue to assign conservation area management responsibility to a designated officer and commit to providing adequate council resources to continue the excellent work that has been done to manage Watford's conservation areas and protect the character of Watford's built environment and street scene, particularly within designated conservation areas.

## **TRAINING**

**Watford Borough Council is committed to equipping its Councillors with the highest levels of knowledge and understanding about conservation and design issues:**

11. Include conservation, design and enforcement issues in the induction and development management training for Councillors to establish a comprehensive training programme.



## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

At the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 20 July 2015, Councillor Rabi Martins stated that he would like to propose a review of the town's conservation areas, and particularly to review the effectiveness of the Watford Conservation Areas Management Plan.

The proposal followed concerns raised by the Estcourt Residents Association that houses in their local conservation area had undertaken inappropriate developments and allowed front garden walls to fall into disrepair.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer advised that she would circulate the proposal form to members interested to participate.

It was anticipated that the review would produce the following outcomes:

- to understand how the Watford Conservation Areas Management Plan was being implemented and the implications this had on the ground, including:
- recent reviews of conservation areas and targeted planning enforcement
- publicity for conservation areas i.e., how residents and other stakeholders were made aware of areas that were designated as conservation areas and the implications of that;
- identify any future work to be undertaken to ensure effective management of conservation areas in the future.

In order to obtain relevant evidence, it was proposed that:

- the Conservation Areas Management Plan should be updated to see what additional work had been undertaken and to identify where further action was required
- a comparative study should be made with two neighbouring authorities to gauge relative resource levels and the policy documents in place
- enforcement issues should be investigated to establish if additional powers were needed, particularly to counter the impact of new and emerging technologies
- the views of local residents and businesses should be sought by conducting a series of one-to-one interviews with Councillors.

The Task Group would comprise:

Councillor Rabi Martins (Proposer)  
Councillor Karen Collett  
Councillor Michael Haley  
Councillor Anne Joynes  
Councillor Linda Topping

Councillor for Central Ward  
Councillor for Woodside Ward  
Councillor for Central Ward  
Councillor for Leggatts Ward  
Councillor for Nascot Ward

This included a late change of membership, prior to the first meeting of the Task Group, with Councillor Joynes replacing Councillor Dhindsa.

## OVERVIEW OF THE TASK GROUP'S WORK

The Management of Conservation Areas Task Group has carried out its work in a little over three months, drawing on the expertise of Watford Borough Council's officers as well as the wider views of residents in order to complete its inquiry.

A first meeting was held on 10 November 2015 at which Councillor Martins was elected Chair. Setting the scene for the Task Group, he underlined the importance of reviewing the effectiveness of the Watford Conservation Areas Management Plan. In particular, he argued that although several areas across the town had been marked for conservation, the character of these was beginning to suffer through inappropriate modifications to buildings without reference to the Council.

The Task Group agreed a busy timetable of meetings with tightly focussed agendas to draw out the key issues for consideration. These were to:

- establish a status report for the Task Group by updating the action points included in the Conservation Areas Management Plan
- examine the effectiveness of Article 4 direction to see if this was sufficiently robust to tackle new threats to conservation areas, such as the siting of solar panels
- study current Council enforcement practices to understand the processes undertaken and the timescales involved
- undertake a comparative study of Watford Borough Council's management of its conservation areas with some neighbouring authorities
- gather information and views from residents living in conservation areas
- examine the rules governing shop front design to ascertain whether more needed to be done to protect their appearance.

This work was carried out in three further meetings of the Task Group on 2 December 2015, 5 January and 2 February 2016.

In addition, a public drop-in session was held at the Town Hall on 26 January 2016. Members of the public, and particularly those living in Watford's conservation areas, were encouraged to give their views directly to Task Group members in a series of informal conversations.

Further feedback from residents was encouraged using an on-line survey, which was promoted through the Council's website and social media.

In a separate survey, the Task Group also sought the views of Councillors.



## RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS

The Task Group's recommendations are intended to improve general awareness and appreciation of Watford Borough Council's conservation areas and ensure that planning rules reflect new technologies.

### COMMUNICATION

The aim of this group of recommendations is to improve public awareness of Watford's conservation areas.

#### **Recommendation 1 – Include information about conservation areas in annual council tax and business rate notices for properties with postcodes in these areas.**

The Task Group is committed to improving public awareness and engagement in Watford's conservation areas. A series of different proposals is suggested to achieve this objective.

The first of these is the introduction of information about conservation areas on the council tax and business rate notifications for the relevant properties. This could be in the form of a small dialogue box, which could sign-post the reader to further details on the Council's website.

The Task Group is mindful of the potential costs of this proposal and of the need to ensure accurate recognition and recording of the properties included in the conservation areas. As such, it is accepted that it may not be possible to introduce this information on the 2016/17 council tax and business rate notifications.

#### **Recommendation 2 – Introduce a symbol on lamp columns or existing street furniture to show that the street or neighbourhood is in a designated conservation area.**

The Task Group is keen to address the lack of awareness about conservation areas not just amongst those living and working in these areas, but also those visiting or passing through.

This could be assisted by using a standardised sign or symbol. Different approaches are currently in use, for example in Estcourt, Watford Heath and Oxhey Village, however the Task Group feels that a single, unified approach should be introduced and used in all the conservation areas.

The Task Group welcomes the work that the Council has undertaken to declutter streets in the conservation areas. This proposal is not intended to undermine this work and the Task Group recommends that the symbol should be affixed to lamp columns or existing street furniture.

It is suggested that Hertfordshire County Council's locality budgets or the Watford Ward Councillors' Neighbourhood Forum budgets might offer possible sources of funding to offset some of the costs of this proposal.

**Recommendation 3 – Improve access to comprehensive information about conservation areas on Watford Borough Council's website, including guidance to residents about living or owning property there.**

In January 2016, Watford Borough Council launched a new website.

The Task Group recommends that the new website should include easily accessible and comprehensive information about conservation areas, including links to all key documents, such as the management plan, character appraisals and shop front design guide, together with guidance for members of the public about what being in a conservation area means in practical terms.

**Recommendation 4 – Encourage Councillors to play an active role in raising awareness of conservation areas, for example through public meetings, promoting local history projects, arranging for officers to speak at local meetings etc.**

The Task Group considers that Councillors have an active part to play in raising public awareness about conservation areas in their wards. It is suggested that they use local meetings to promote the benefits as well as to draw attention to the requirements of undertaking certain alterations to properties. Meetings could involve Council officers who would be invited to speak and answer questions from members of the public.

**Recommendation 5 – Consider alternative ways to engage with residents and businesses about the need for planning permissions for certain alterations in conservation areas. This might include utilising social media to sign-post them to the Council's website for comprehensive information.**

The work of the Task Group has been informed using a survey of residents. This survey was widely promoted using social media and the subsequent level of public engagement has been encouraging.

The Task Group recognises the potential benefits of using social media and suggests its use for future Council consultation and information exercises.

In regard to conservation areas, it is suggested that the Council might use social media at key times of the year, for example when people are considering making alterations to their homes in the early Spring, to signpost them to the Council's website for advice about the planning permissions required for some alterations to properties in conservation areas.

## **LEGISLATION, COUNCIL POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

The aim of these recommendations is to ensure that local planning rules affecting conservation areas reflect new technologies and other initiatives or legislation.

### **Recommendation 6 – Review current Article 4 directions to reflect changes in the General Permitted Development Orders and consider whether other classes should be included.**

The Task Group recognises that the Council operates in an ever changing environment in terms of emerging technologies and changes in government legislation.

In the light of changes in the General Permitted Development Orders, it is recommended that current Article 4 directions are reviewed and, where necessary, revised.

### **Recommendation 7 – Ensure that procedures remain in place to undertake regular reviews of Watford Borough Council's Article 4 directions in order to address the potential impact of changes in technology or legislation.**

It was noted that a timetable of regular reviews of Watford Borough Council's Article 4 directions was in place. Welcoming this fact, the Task Group further recommended that time and resources should continue to remain in place to enable this action to continue.

### **Recommendation 8 – Continue with the regular review of Watford Borough Council's toolkit of documents ensuring that these remain relevant.**

To inform its work, the Task Group undertook a comparative study of the toolkit of documents available in Watford Borough, Dacorum Borough, St Albans City and District and Three Rivers District Councils. This revealed that Watford Borough Council had a robust toolkit of conservation documents in place.

Members of the Task Group consider that it is vital that this toolkit is reviewed regularly and updated as required to ensure that decisions could stand up to challenge at appeal.

**Recommendation 9 – Ensure that Watford Borough Council’s development management officers continue to consult with the conservation and policy team when considering applications adjacent to conservation areas, in order to minimise the impact of new developments on properties within those areas.**

The Task Group received a number of comments from residents concerned about the impact of new developments just outside their conservation areas, but impacting on them.

In addition, the Task Group recognises that some areas of Watford are undergoing periods of rapid change and development. For this reason, it is important to ensure that existing good practice, which sees the active involvement of conservation and policy officers in development management discussions impacting on conservation areas, continues.

## **COUNCIL RESOURCES**

The Task Group acknowledges the excellent work that has been undertaken by officers in Watford’s conservation areas and considers that it is important to continue this good work.

**Recommendation 10 – Continue to assign conservation area management responsibility to a designated officer and commit to providing adequate council resources to continue the excellent work that has been done to manage Watford’s conservation areas and protect the character of Watford’s built environment and street scene, particularly within designated conservation areas.**

The Task Group acknowledges that officers and the administration have a long standing record of creating and managing conservation areas in the town and considers that it is important to continue this good work and maintain the necessary high standards

In recognition of the importance of maintaining the character of the conservation areas, it is further recommended that officer resources should not be eroded over time.

## **TRAINING**

Watford Borough Council is committed to equipping its Councillors with the highest levels of knowledge and understanding about conservation and design issues.

**Recommendation 11 – Include conservation, design and enforcement issues in the induction and development management training for Councillors to establish a comprehensive training programme.**

During its investigation, the Task Group drew on expertise from a range of disciplines, including conservation, design and enforcement. The Task Group



believes that knowledge of these different areas is important for the work of Councillors, particularly those involved in development management.

The Task Group recommends that a modular approach be introduced for induction and development management training in the future. This could include the production of a succinct factsheet for new members listing, *inter alia*, key facts about conservation areas and any historic buildings in their individual wards.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### **WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL**

<https://www.watford.gov.uk>

1. A guide to living in a conservation area (taken from the Watford Borough Council's website, 2015)
2. Article 4 Directions – information from Watford Borough Council's website, 2015
3. Conservation Areas in Watford map
4. Conservation Areas Management Plan (Supplementary planning document), adopted July 2013
5. Urban Design and Conservation Strategy, adopted 2014

### **HISTORIC ENGLAND**

<https://historicengland.org.uk>

6. Living in a Conservation Area, Historic England website
7. Understanding Place: Conservation Area, Designation, Appraisal and Management
8. Valuing Places: Good practice in conservation areas

### **PLANNING PORTAL**

<http://www.planningportal.gov.uk>

9. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment
10. Glossary extracted from the National Planning Policy Framework's Glossary

### Management of Conservation Areas – evaluation table

<b>Section 1 – Scrutiny Suggestion</b>	
<b>Proposer: Councillor/Officer/Member of public Cllr Rabi Martins</b>	
<p><b>Topic recommended for scrutiny:</b></p> <p><i>Please include as much detail as is available about the specific such as;</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>areas which should be <u>included</u> in the review.</i></li> <li>• <i>areas which should be <u>excluded</u> from the review.</i></li> <li>• <i>Whether the focus should be on past performance, future policy or both.</i></li> </ul>	<p>Management of Conservation Areas in the Town</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the effectiveness of the Watford Conservation Areas Management Plan.</li> </ul>
<b>Why have you recommended this topic for scrutiny?</b>	<p>The issue has been brought to the attention of ward councillors by the Estcourt Road Residents Association because Estcourt Road is in a Conservation Area and according to them a number of houses in the area have replaced windows, allowed front garden walls to fall into disrepair, built extensions etc.</p>

**What are the specific outcomes you wish to see from the review?**

*Examples might include:*

- *To identify what is being done and what the potential barriers are;*
- *To review relevant performance indicators;*
- *To compare our policies with those of a similar authority;*
- *To assess the environmental/social impacts;*
- *To Benchmark current service provision;*
- *To find out community perceptions and experience;*
- *To identify the gap between provision and need*

1. To understand how the Watford Conservation Areas Management Plan is being implemented and the implications this has on the ground, including:

- Recent reviews of conservation areas and targeted planning enforcement;
- Publicity for conservation areas i.e. how residents and other stakeholders are made aware of areas that are designated as conservation areas and the implications of that;
- Ongoing review of conservation areas.

<p><b>How do you think evidence might be obtained?</b></p> <p><i>Examples might include</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Questionnaires/Surveys</i></li> <li>• <i>Site visits</i></li> <li>• <i>Interviewing witnesses</i></li> <li>• <i>Research</i></li> <li>• <i>Performance data</i></li> <li>• <i>Public hearings</i></li> <li>• <i>Comparisons with other local authorities</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Conservation Area Character Appraisals;</li> <li>b. Conservation Areas Management Plan;</li> <li>c. Examples of enforcement action;</li> <li>d. Results of revision consultations;</li> <li>e. Additional comments relating to a Conservation Area article in About Watford;</li> <li>f. Input from Ward Councillors;</li> <li>g. Input from Residents Association's in Conservation areas.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Does the proposed item meet the following criteria?</b></p>	
<p>It must affect a group or community of people</p>	<p>Yes – those people living and working in conservation areas.</p>
<p>It must relate to a service, event or issue in which the council has a significant stake</p>	<p>The character of a town is shaped by its buildings and people.</p> <p>The council has a major role in promoting and protecting the Borough's heritage, through its planning function, property management and leisure services.</p> <p>The council recognises its responsibility to maintain its character as evidenced by its designation of selected areas as Conservation areas and a locally listed buildings register.</p>

<p>It must not have been a topic of scrutiny within the last 12 months</p> <p><i>There will be exceptions to this arising from notified changing circumstances. Scrutiny will also maintain an interest in the progress of recommendations and issues arising from past reports.</i></p>	<p>No similar topic has been considered by scrutiny in the past 5 years or more.</p>
<p>It must not be an issue, such as planning or licensing, which is dealt with by another council committee</p>	<p>It is not an issue specifically dealt with by any other council committee.</p>
<p><b>Does the topic meet the council's priorities?</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Making Watford a better place to live in</li> <li>2. To provide the lead for Watford's sustainable economic growth</li> <li>3. Promoting an active, cohesive and well informed Town</li> <li>4. To operate the Council efficiently and effectively</li> </ol> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Please confirm which ones</i> <b>Yes – 1 and 3 above</b></p>

<p><b>Are you aware of any limitations of time, other constraints or risks which need to be taken into account?</b></p> <p><i>Factors to consider are:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>forthcoming milestones, demands on the relevant service area and member availability:</i></li> <li>• <i>imminent policy changes either locally, regionally or nationally within the area under review.</i></li> </ul>	<p>YES</p> <p>The consultation on Conservation Area Appraisals won't take place until October.</p> <p>The Senior Planning (Conservation and Urban Design) is leaving the authority at the end of August. This is likely to be a post that is difficult to fill. Officer resources to service the O&amp;S review are therefore likely to be limited and this work could impact on other projects such as Local Plan 2.</p>
<p><b>Does the topic involve a Council partner or other outside body?</b></p>	<p>Not directly</p>

<p>Are there likely to be any Equality implications which will need to be considered?</p> <p><i>Protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Age</i></li> <li>• <i>Disability</i></li> <li>• <i>Gender reassignment</i></li> <li>• <i>Pregnancy or maternity</i></li> <li>• <i>Race</i></li> <li>• <i>Religion or belief</i></li> <li>• <i>Sex</i></li> <li>• <i>Sexual orientation</i></li> <li>• <i>Marriage or civil partnership (only in respect of the requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination)</i></li> </ul>	<p>N/A</p>
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<p><b>Sign off</b>  <i>(It is expected that any Councillor proposing a topic agreed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee will participate in the Task Group)</i></p>	
<p><b>Councillor/Officer</b></p> <p><i>R Martins</i></p>	<p><b>Date</b></p> <p><b>18<sup>th</sup> May 2015</b></p>



**MANAGEMENT OF CONSERVATION AREAS TASK GROUP****Tuesday 10 November 2015****Agreed Actions**

Present: Councillor Martins (Chair)  
Councillors Collett, Haley, Joynes and Topping

Also Present: Urban Design and Conservation Manager  
Committee and Scrutiny Officer  
Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer (IM)

**1. Election of Chair/Task Group Membership**

Councillor Martins was elected chair.

The membership of the Management of Conservation Areas Task Group was confirmed. This included a permanent change in membership, with Councillor Joynes replacing Councillor Dhindsa, which had been agreed prior to the start of the review.

RESOLVED –

that Councillor Martins be elected Chair of the Task Group.

**2. Apologies for Absence**

No apologies had been received.

**3. Disclosures of Interest**

It was noted that each of the Councillors had at least one conservation area in their ward, with the exception of Councillor Joynes in Leggatts ward.

**4. Scope and Background Papers**

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer confirmed that the Task Group had a tight timetable. Work needed to be completed before the end of the Municipal Year.

The Task Group's findings would need to be concluded in the week beginning 1 February in order to allow reporting to:

- Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 3 March 2016
- Cabinet on 7 March 2016 (Chair to attend).

Councillor Martins argued that the review of the effectiveness of the Watford Conservation Areas Management Plan was an important piece of work. It might not be possible to cover all the issues within the time allocated. In that event, one of the recommendations might relate to further work that should be undertaken.

Watford was a small town but had a number of locally and nationally listed buildings. Although several areas across the town had been marked for conservation, the character of these was beginning to suffer through inappropriate modifications to buildings without reference to the Council.

The Task Group should review the current management of conservation areas in Watford and establish what more could be done to protect them in the future.

Councillor Martins invited views on what steps the Task Group might take. During discussions the following ideas were raised:

- comparisons should be made with a neighbouring authority e.g., Dacorum Borough Council or St Albans City and District Council
- residents' views should be sought on their experiences and issues about living in a conservation area. This might be undertaken in an informal drop-in session arranged at the Town Hall
- some focus should be given to shop fronts and whether more could be done to protect their appearance
- the Council might consider charging for its services after non-compliance by residents or businesses following earlier notifications
- the Task Group should invite the Council's enforcement officers to speak at one of the meetings to outline their powers and rates of success.

Members were encouraged to write in with any further thoughts to the Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer.

## 5. **Next Steps**

Summing up the Task Group's suggestions, the Chair proposed the following actions to be undertaken:

- update the 13 action points (G1 – G13) in the Conservation Areas Management Plan to provide a status report for the Task Group
- examine the issues around the rules governing shop fronts to establish how these might be protected better
- examine the effectiveness of Article 4 Direction (providing additional planning control in a particular location by removing "Permitted Development" rights over certain alterations e.g., new porches, replacement windows and doors) to see if it is sufficiently robust to tackle new threats to conservation areas such as the siting of solar panels
- study current Council enforcement practices to understand the processes undertaken, including examples of proactive work, formal action and the time-scales involved (to be discussed at 2 December meeting)

- gather information and views from individual residents, residents associations and other interested parties e.g., architects (Joe Kent), Mary Forsythe, Oxhey Village Environment Group. This could be by way of a drop-in session to the Town Hall which should be publicised as widely as possible. Councillors would be asked to help publicise the event to interested parties by contacting individuals and residents associations in their wards [the survey undertaken for the housing trust task group would be used as a template]
- look at Dacorum Borough Council and/or St Albans Council to see if lessons could be learned.

## 6. **Date of Next Meeting**

Three meeting dates were agreed:

- Wednesday 2 December
- Tuesday 5 January
- Tuesday 26 January

(The topics for each of the meetings to be agreed by the Chair and officers.)

Further meetings could be arranged as required.



**MANAGEMENT OF CONSERVATION AREAS TASK GROUP****Wednesday 2 December 2015****Agreed Actions**

Present: Councillor Martins (Chair)  
Councillors Collett, Haley, Joynes and Topping

Also Present: Interim Development Management Section Head  
Urban Design and Conservation Manager  
Enforcement Officers (LS, SW)  
Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer (IM)

**7. Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

**8. Disclosures of Interest**

There were none.

**9. Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 November were submitted and signed.

**10. Enforcement**

The Task Group had received a Planning Enforcement Plan for 2015. This outlined how the Council dealt with alleged breaches of planning control and how it made decisions regarding enforcement action to rectify proven breaches.

Enforcement officers were invited to discuss how the enforcement process was undertaken in conservation areas, and whether the approach taken differed to non-conservation areas.

During a wide-ranging discussion, the following points were raised:

- conservation area designation did not remove permitted development rights for properties in that area. (Permitted development rights were granted by Parliament and not by the local authority.) Buildings within conservation areas might be subject to Article 4 Directions, which would remove permitted development rights and require certain works to have planning permission
- in order to assist residents and businesses in conservation areas, local planning officers provided free advice and assistance on planning applications in those areas. They also imposed less onerous requirements on drawings and materials details
- Article 4 Directions varied between conservation areas. A full list of all the Article 4 Directions was included in the Conservation Areas Development Plan. Article

#### 4 Directions did not cover building interiors

- General Permitted Development Orders (GPDO) had changed over time. It was important for local authorities to assess their Article 4 provisions to ensure that they kept pace with change, particularly in regard to new technologies such as satellite dishes and solar panels. This might be an area of work that the Task Group could recommend
- enforcement procedures needed to be consistent, regardless of whether the case was in a conservation area or not. Alleged breaches in conservation areas were not expedited. Different consideration was given to listed building enforcement, where work carried out without the necessary consent and failing to comply with a condition attached to that consent was a criminal offence
- enforcement action was discretionary and required officers to follow five key principles (proportionality, expediency, consistency, transparency and equality). Alleged breaches of planning control within a conservation area required consideration of whether planning permission was likely to have been granted had due process been allowed to take place
- breaches of control were dealt with according to set procedures, which also attached deadlines for completion at each stage. These were set out in paragraph 4.8 of Watford Borough Council's Planning Enforcement Plan 2015 (circulated with the agenda for this meeting)
- development became immune from enforcement if no action was taken within four years of substantial completion
- the number of complaints about alleged breaches of planning control in conservation areas was relatively small. There had been none in the last year concerning replacement windows
- there were insufficient Council resources to undertake proactive enforcement work. Prior to the departure of the Senior Planner (Urban Design and Conservation), all properties in Watford Borough Council's conservation areas had been photographed. This gave a baseline of information to use in any disputes. [A new officer – shared with Three Rivers District Council – would be in post from 7 December.]
- the Interim Development Management Section Head tabled a comparative spreadsheet, detailing planning enforcement benchmark statistics in the East Hertfordshire region. This quantitative data showed that very little proactive work was being undertaken by Watford and surrounding councils, although it was known that this was not necessarily the case outside Hertfordshire
- it was important to consider the Council's objectives with the introduction of any new restrictions. Objectives in different conservation areas might vary. For example, there had been some success in removing unnecessary street clutter (signage) in residential areas as well as replacing unsightly concrete bollards. However in the civic core there were issues about advertising and shop front design that needed to be balanced with the commercial needs of the area

- there was a lack of awareness about conservation areas as well as the implications of living or running a business in a conservation area. This might be assisted by using a standardised sign or symbol on existing street signs (although there was no desire to introduce additional street clutter)
- another suggestion, which could run in parallel with the street signage proposal above, would be the introduction of a dialogue box on the annual council tax and business rate notifications. This would alert the addressee to the fact that their house or business was located in a conservation area and would signpost them to further information about development issues
- the new Council website should make more prominent reference to conservation areas and the restrictions placed on development in these areas. Whilst comprehensive information was currently available on the website, it was not always easy to locate.

## 11. **Conservation Areas Management Plan**

The Task Group had received an update of actions on the Conservation Areas Management Plan as well as a separate post completion evaluation report, which had been published in February 2015.

These reports were noted.

Any comments should be sent to the Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer.

## 12. **Next Steps**

### **Tuesday 5 January 2016**

- Comparative study with Dacorum and/or St Albans
- Shop front design guide
- Preparation for 26 January drop-in
- Draft survey for all Councillors

### **Tuesday 26 January 2016**

- Drop-in session at the Town Hall to gather views from residents, residents associations and other interested parties (5.00pm to 8.30pm?)

### **Tuesday 2 February 2016**

- Review of feedback from the drop-in session and related information
- Recommendations for the final report

## 13. **Date of Next Meeting**

- Tuesday 5 January
- Tuesday 26 January
- Tuesday 2 February (to begin at 6.00pm)





**MANAGEMENT OF CONSERVATION AREAS TASK GROUP****Tuesday 5 January 2016****Agreed Actions**

Present: Councillor Martins (Chair)  
Councillors Collett, Haley, Joynes and Topping

Also Present: Councillor Connal (to agenda item 6)  
Head of Regeneration and Development  
Urban Design and Conservation Manager  
Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer (IM)

**14. Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

**15. Disclosures of Interest**

There were none.

**16. Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 December were submitted and signed.

**17. Comparative Study**

The Task Group reviewed the comparative study of data regarding the management of conservation areas in Watford Borough, Dacorum, St Albans City and District and Three Rivers District Councils.

Although there was some variation in the size and scope of the various Councils, the comparative exercise highlighted the different approaches in neighbouring authorities as well as best practice.

During discussions, the following points were raised:

- there was scope to examine Watford Borough Council's Article 4 Directions, particularly in regard to new technologies. Following best practice guidance, the Council's approach was to specify classes of development rather than to pursue full scale removal of development rights. Any new provisions would be reviewed in this context and take into account advice from Historic England (replacing English Heritage) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- Watford Borough Council had a relatively favourable resource allocation in its conservation expertise, despite previous restructuring. Additional expertise could be brought in on an ad hoc basis as the need arise
- Watford Borough Council had a robust toolkit of conservation documents in place, which was vital to back up its position in the event of an appeal. It was noted that

much of the detailed work had been achieved when a full time conservation officer had been in place.

## 18. **Shopfronts**

The Task Group revisited the Shopfront Guidance to establish whether any changes should be made to the document.

Following a brief discussion, there were no immediate proposals for change.

The Chair invited Task Group members to submit any late comments to the Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer for consideration.

## 19. **Preparation for 26 January 2016 Drop-in Session**

During discussions on arrangements for the public drop-in session on Tuesday 26 January, the following points were agreed:

- the drop-in session would run from 5.30 pm until 7.30 pm, although discussions would continue if members of the public remained
- social media, the Council's website, leafleting to houses in the conservation areas, poster distribution around the town, and the Watford Observer would all be used to promote the drop-in session
- further public feedback would be sought using Survey Monkey, with a link on the Council's website. This would contain a slightly reworded survey to make the questions more self-explanatory
- all members would be asked to contact their residents associations, interested groups and individuals etc, to advertise the drop-in event and encourage attendance and questionnaire responses. To assist in this, posters would be distributed to Councillors to place in local shops and community spaces.

## 20. **Councillor Survey**

The following points were agreed on the Councillor Survey:

- it should be sent to all Councillors
- the survey should be altered slightly to reflect the fact that some Councillors would not either live in or represent a ward containing a conservation area
- question 7 should be reworded to encourage the development of a database of individuals who could be approached in regard to conservation issues.

## 21. **Date of Next Meetings**

- Tuesday 26 January (5.30pm to 7.30pm)
- Tuesday 2 February (to begin at 6.00pm)

**MANAGEMENT OF CONSERVATION AREAS TASK GROUP****Tuesday 2 February 2016****Agreed Actions**

Present: Councillor Martins (Chair)  
Councillors Collett, Joynes and Topping

Also Present: Urban Design and Conservation Manager  
Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer (IM)

**22. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies had been received from Councillor Haley.

**23. Disclosures of Interest**

There were none.

**24. Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 January were submitted and signed.

The Chair commented that this would be the final meeting of the Task Group. Future discussions would be undertaken using email.

He thanked members of the Task Group and officers for their time and contributions.

The Task Group's final report would be presented to Overview and Scrutiny on 3 March and then to Cabinet on 7 March.

**25. Survey Feedback**

The Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer had tabled a late draft report on the findings of the survey for residents. The report would be subject to further editing and required a number of appendices to be added.

She reported that the link to the survey had been taken off the Council's website on 2 February. 139 responses had been received in total. Of these, 127 had been completed on-line, 8 at the drop-in session on 26 January and 4 during door-to-door canvassing.

Two spikes in the response rate were notable. The first had followed inclusion of the survey in the Mayor's fortnightly newsletter on 22 January. The second followed a boost the survey's profile on Facebook on 29 January.

The Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer observed it was important to understand that the respondents were self-selecting and therefore not necessarily

representative of the wider views of residents living in Conservation Areas.

Despite these caveats, the survey findings were both constructive and encouraging. Residents appeared engaged in their local areas and had put forward constructive comments and suggestions.

The Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer advised that the appendices, which would provide more detailed information on the comments and concerns of residents, would be circulated to members of the Task Group separately.

Task Group members expressed disappointment at the limited number of responses to the Councillor survey – 6 in total, of which 5 were members of the Task Group. It was agreed that this did not provide sufficient data to undertake any meaningful analysis.

Councillor Collett agreed to raise the Task Group's concerns about the lack of Councillor engagement at the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

## **26. Task Group Recommendations**

The Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer had tabled a sheet of draft recommendations drawn from the Task Group's discussions to date and feedback from the surveys.

These were reviewed and discussed by the Task Group. Approving the direction of the proposed recommendations, it was agreed to add more details to the current statements and circulate these to the Task Group for final approval.

During discussions on the proposed recommendations, the following points were raised:

- there should be an additional recommendation for the Council to be proactive with residents about the requirements for undertaking certain alterations to properties in conservation areas. This should use social media, which had proved an effective communication tool in the survey for residents;
- the final report should acknowledge the Task Group's understanding that there would be cost implications in some of the recommendations and it would be important to seek funding sources for any projects to enhance conservation areas;
- it would be helpful to include some information on Watford's conservation areas in the induction training for new members. This might involve producing a succinct factsheet with signposts to the Council's website for more detailed information.

**Conservation Areas Management Plan  
Actions Update**

<b>Actions</b>		<b>Update</b>
G1	<p><b>Guidance Information</b></p> <p>The Council will produce a section on Conservation Area Guidance on its website and will send out a letter annually to all residents and businesses in the conservation areas informing them of any significant changes to local planning controls.</p>	<p>Information is included on the Council's website:  <a href="#">Conservation advice :: Watford Borough Council</a>  <a href="#">A guide to living in a conservation area :: Watford Borough Council</a></p> <p>An annual letter has not been issued as there have been no significant changes within the conservation areas. Officers need to consider whether an annual reminder letter to owners would be effective.</p>
G2	<p><b>Raising the profile of conservation areas</b></p> <p>The Council will utilise opportunities for raising the profile of conservation areas by using existing communication resources, installing new street signs, working with local community groups and exploring the potential of new media/technology as appropriate.</p>	<p>The Council uses the About Watford publication to promote campaigns successes.</p> <p>Street signs – information on bands below existing street name plates.</p> <p>St Mary's – new website, signage and leaflets produced. A film was produced 'Nest of Stones', which has been featured at various events including the Edinburgh International Film Festival.</p>
G3	<p><b>Delivering effective development management</b></p> <p>The Council will utilise the full range of strategic policy and guidance documents to ensure that development in conservation areas is of a standard that enhances the amenity of the local area.</p>	<p>Character appraisals have been produced for each conservation area.</p> <p>Supplementary planning documents include: the Shopfront Design Guide (adopted February 2013).</p>

<b>Actions</b>		<b>Update</b>
G4	<p><b>Traditional materials</b></p> <p>Appropriate external materials and finishes will be expected in all new development in conservation areas. The Council will seek to encourage the use of traditional materials through pre-application advice, as well as in information in relevant planning documents and on the Council website.</p>	<p>Article 4 directions have had an impact in reversing the previous incremental deterioration of the character of conservation areas. The Council has been able to direct residents towards using 'conservation style' products.</p> <p>The Council has just sent out a guide for Estcourt residents alongside the letter regarding the consultation on the revised appraisal – this could be sent out more widely and put on the Council's website.</p>
G5	<p><b>Article 4 Directions</b></p> <p>The Council will consult on targeted Article 4 Directions for those areas identified as being appropriate in conservation areas. If Directions are confirmed, the Council will monitor the properties in question and provide adequate levels of publicity to ensure their successful application.</p>	<p>The consultation took place alongside the Conservation Areas Management Plan in Spring 2013. Explanations were given at public meetings and, as a part of the order, the Council wrote to the properties affected.</p> <p>Information about Article 4 directions are available on the Council's website – <a href="#">Article 4 directions :: Watford Borough Council</a> and in each of the Conservation Area Character Appraisals.</p> <p>See above comment regarding the two page guide sent to Estcourt residents (under G4).</p>
G6	<p><b>Highway Works</b></p> <p>Utilising national and regional best practice guidance, the Council will seek to ensure that any future highways works will bring a positive improvement to the character and appearance of the conservation areas.</p>	<p>The Council has worked with Hertfordshire County Council, particularly on replacing lamp columns and de-cluttering projects.</p>

<b>Actions</b>		<b>Update</b>
G7	<p><b>No Waiting Markings</b></p> <p>Where yellow lines are necessary within conservation areas they should preferably be 50mm wide, with a line colour of BS 381C No. 310 (primrose). Any additional signage relating to parking/loading restrictions should be kept to a minimum.</p>	<p>The introduction of 'conservation grade' double yellow lines is only practical where an entire road is being resurfaced. Removing existing no waiting markings is expensive, both financially and environmentally.</p>
G8	<p><b>Street clutter audit</b></p> <p>The Council will carry out a detailed audit of the public realm to identify the best way to minimise street clutter and better integrate street furniture in the conservation areas. An Action Plan for reducing street clutter will be prepared and taken forward in collaboration with public sector partners and elected members.</p>	<p>Work has been undertaken with Hertfordshire County Council – this resulted in the removal of 'at any time' signs, which were no longer legally required.</p> <p>The removal of guard railings is more complicated as safety audits are required.</p>
G9	<p><b>Trees and Green Spaces</b></p> <p>The Council will monitor trees in conservation areas that have notable amenity value. Where appropriate, opportunities for additional tree planting will be explored. The Council will ensure that a collaborative approach is taken to the management of green spaces within conservation areas.</p>	<p>Tree planting has already taken place in Estcourt Road Greening (see annex 1).</p> <p>Works have also taken place to enhance Watford Heath by the parks team.</p>

<b>Actions</b>		<b>Update</b>
G10	<p><b>Enhancement Schemes</b></p> <p>The Council will explore the potential for delivering the enhancement schemes detailed in Section 3 of this document, as well as other schemes as they become available in conservation areas. The Council should produce Planning Briefs for those sites detailed in Section 3 of this document as being suitable for conservation led regeneration.</p>	<p>Enhancements have included –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tree planting</li> <li>• plaque restoration</li> <li>• lamp column repainting.</li> </ul> <p>See annex 1.</p> <p>No planning briefs have been produced yet – these would require additional resources as they are not a current priority.</p>
G11	<p><b>Community Group and Heritage Champions</b></p> <p>The Council should work actively with local community groups and elected councillors to improve the management and monitoring of conservation areas.</p>	<p>Councillor Mark Watkin is the Heritage Champion for 2015/16</p> <p>OVEG was involved in conservation area designation for Oxhey and in developing ideas for Watford Heath. Other groups have not been as willing to engage collectively, but the Council is in touch with active members of the community who are willing to work with the Council and to provide comment.</p>
G12	<p><b>Conservation Area Character Appraisals</b></p> <p>The Council will aim to update conservation area character appraisals every five years to ensure that they are fit for purpose. This process should involve a reassessment of the conservation area boundaries.</p>	<p>Character appraisals are currently under review and have been published for consultation. Four have been updated and are currently out for consultation – ending 4<sup>th</sup> December 2015. The attached table at annex 2 shows the work plan for the next five years, including when reviews are scheduled.</p>



<b>Actions</b>		<b>Update</b>
G13	<p><b>Enforcement</b></p> <p>Wherever practicable the Council will take steps to deal with the effects of unauthorised development in order to protect the special character and appearance of the conservation areas. A photographic record of the conservation areas should be regularly maintained to ensure that enforcement action can be successfully taken forward.</p>	<p>Proactive planning enforcement work has been undertaken, e.g. removal of 100 unauthorised signs; removal/relocation of satellite dishes.</p> <p>Further work will be carried out in those cases where residents have not complied.</p> <p>There is a photographic record of all Article 4 properties (2013). Where proactive programmes have been undertaken, such as satellite dish removal/relocation work, the Council has also photographed all of these properties. This record should be reviewed in 2018.</p>

## Enhancement Schemes

## Annex 1

Scheme	Location	Stakeholders	Progress
Bridge Repairs	Grove Mill Lane	Canal & River Trust, WBC	Works added to C&RT maintenance programme for 2015/16.
Canal Towpath Upgrade	Grove Mill Lane	Canal & River Trust, WBC, HCC	Works complete.
Tombs Renovation	St Mary's	WBC, Heritage Lottery Fund	Works complete.
Wall Repairs	St Mary's	Landowners, WBC	Wall is responsibility of private landowner (not WBC). Repairs not urgent.
Landscape Plan for green space adjacent to car park	St Mary's	WBC	Draft plan produced. Parks Department currently looking into funding as part of wider open space enhancement programme. Target of 2015/16.
Man & Woman Sculpture Renovation	St Mary's	WBC	Plinth replaced. Sculpture cleaning scheduled for March 2015.
Footway Improvements	The Square	WBC, HCC	Works complete.
Cemetery Enhancements	The Square	WBC	Works complete.
Church Paving - St John's	Estcourt	St John's Church, WBC, HCC	Draft plan produced. Parks Department currently looking into funding (e.g. landfill tax grant). Target for works of Christmas 2015.
Estcourt Road 'Greening'	Estcourt	WBC, HCC	New street trees planted. Pocket park upgraded. Plans for additional landscaping at southern end nearing completion.

<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Stakeholders</b>	<b>Progress</b>
Watford Heath Enhancements	Watford Heath	WBC	Final plan complete. Works to take place in Summer 2015.
Highway Works	Watford Heath	HCC	Draft plan produced. Cllr SGM may fund in 2015/16 through locality budget.
Bandstand Enhancement	Civic Core	WBC, Heritage Lottery Fund	Funding agreed. Works to take place in Summer 2015.
Dancing Woman Sculpture Renovation	Civic Core	WBC	Works complete.
Peace Memorial Renovation	Civic Core	WBC, War Memorials Trust	Works complete.
The Parade Public Realm Enhancement	Civic Core	WBC	Works complete.
Enhancement of Public Space adjacent to St Albans House	Civic Core	WBC, HCC	Works in progress. Completion in April 2015.
Enhancement of Public Space adjacent to Town Hall	Civic Core	WBC, HCC	Draft plans produced. HCC exploring funding options. Target of 2016/17.
Demolish Flyover	Civic Core	WBC, HCC	No progress.
Underpass Entrance Enhancements	High Street/King Street	WBC, HCC	New footway surface, safety mirror and coping to plant beds complete. Landscape works drawn up. Cllr SGM may fund in 2015/16 through locality budget.

<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Stakeholders</b>	<b>Progress</b>
Pavement widening: High Street	High Street/King Street	WBC, HCC	Draft plans produced. Funding from S106 partially achieved; remainder may be collected in Spring 2015. Target of 2015/16.
Plaque Restoration	Macdonnell Gardens	Haig Homes, WBC	Works complete.
Access Road Improvements	Macdonnell Gardens	Haig Homes	Works are down to Haig Homes. Not urgent.

## Conservation and Design Team Document Review Schedule - Dec 2015

		2015/16				2016/17				2017/18				2018/19				2019/20				Comments	
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
Character of the Area Study	2011																					May not be necessary	
Local List	2010																						Will be a few changes
BAR	2012																						Could be done externally
CA Management Plan	2013																						
RDG	2008																						Adoption of review July 2014
Free Standing Heritage Assets Management Plan	2014																						Annual work programme – liaise with facilities – external contractors
Shopfront Design Guide	2013																						
Watford Heath	2008 updated 2013																						Updated Document Adopted 2013
High Street	2007 updated 2013																						Updated Document adopted 2013
St Mary's	2009																						Consultation end 04/12/15
Civic Core	2009																						As above
Nascot	2010																						As Above
Estcourt	2010																						As above
The Square	2011																						
Macdonnell Gardens	2012																						
Grove Mill	2012																						Joint with TRDC
Oxhey Village	2013																						Adopt Q1



## COMPARATIVE STUDY WITH DACORUM, ST ALBANS AND THREE RIVERS

	<b>WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL</b>	<b>DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL</b>	<b>ST ALBANS CITY AND DISTRICT COUNCIL</b>	<b>THREE RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL</b>
Number of conservation areas	10	25	19	22
Number of locally listed buildings	240	around 400	around 4,000	over 250
Number of nationally listed buildings	92	over 2,000	over 800	350
Size of planning teams, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>specialist conservation officers</li> <li>design officers</li> </ul>	0.5 plus 0.8 FTE on conservation and design. Planners DM team - 8 plus 2 enforcement; policy 4 FTE but part of the 0.8 is policy as well	3 specialist conservation and design officers (2 part-time), plus 12 planners (3 enforcement officers, 4 policy)	1.5 posts – 1 x full-time conservation, 0.5 x design	0.5 conservation officer DM team - 8 plus 2 enforcement; policy 4 FTE
Suite of documents in place, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>conservation area appraisal</li> <li>conservation area management plan</li> <li>shop front design guide</li> <li>Article 4 directions</li> </ul>	all these documents are in place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>conservation area appraisals (do not cover all areas)</li> <li>conservation area management plan in train</li> <li>around 400 Article 4 directions (do not cover all areas needed)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>conservation area character statements</li> <li>Article 4 directions</li> <li>shopfront design guide (1985)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>conservation area appraisals</li> <li>conservation area management plan</li> <li>Article 4 directions</li> <li>shopfront design guide</li> </ul>
Are these documents reviewed and updated regularly?	yes – conservation area character appraisals are being updated currently and the remainder are reviewed on a rolling programme approx every 5 years	no	this is part of the team's workload, but there are limited resources to complete this task	no

	<b>WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL</b>	<b>DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL</b>	<b>ST ALBANS CITY AND DISTRICT COUNCIL</b>	<b>THREE RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL</b>
What do the Article 4 directions cover?	enlargement, improvement and alterations. Alterations to roof facing the street, porches, painting and exterior work, garden gates fences and walls, buildings in curtilage, storage containers for domestic heating, formation of hardstanding	roofscape, including chimneys and roof lights, front façade, front gardens and garden walls, painting, materials, fenestration, front doors, hardstanding	all permitted development withdrawn in the more historically important parts of the conservation area	all permitted development withdrawn in the conservation area
Volume of planning applications to conservation team	approximately 210 per year or 4/5 per week	12-30 applications per week	38 majors, 105 listed buildings, 15 conservation area minors and demolitions per annum	35 per month, or approximately 400 per annum
Total number of planning applications to the Council	around 1,700 per annum	around 3,000 per annum	around 3,500 to 4,000 per annum	around 3,000 per annum



**MANAGEMENT OF CONSERVATION AREAS TASK GROUP  
PUBLIC SURVEY, JANUARY 2016**

The survey asked the following questions –

1. Which street do you live on?
2. How long have you lived in the area?
  - less than 12 months
  - 1-5 years
  - 5 years or longer
3. Do you know if your street is in a conservation area?
  - Yes
  - No
4. How did you find out that you lived in a conservation area? (Tick all that apply.)
 

i) informed by the solicitor when you bought the house	
ii) informed by the landlord when you rented the property	
iii) letter from Watford Borough Council	
iv) advised by your local residents association	
v) other (please give details)	
5. Are you aware of the planning restrictions on properties in conservation areas?
  - Yes
  - No
6. Do you have examples when planning restrictions have been used?
7. Do you have examples of when action has been taken to rectify inappropriate developments or alterations where you live?
8. Do you have any other comments about conservation areas?
9. Would you like the Council to contact you in the future about conservation issues?
  - Yes
  - No
10. Would you like to hear about other council news and events by email?
  - Yes
  - No

11. Please fill in your contact details below

Name  
Address  
and/or postcode  
Email address  
Phone number

**MANAGEMENT OF CONSERVATION AREAS TASK GROUP  
PUBLIC SURVEY: ANALYSIS**

## OVERVIEW

139 responses were received in total. Of these, 127 were completed on-line, 8 at the drop-in session on 26 January 2016, and 4 during door-to-door canvassing.

The survey was on the Council's website for 3 weeks: from 12 January until 2 February. It was promoted in the Mayor's fortnightly newsletter on 22 January (which is sent to around 2,000 addresses), as well as on Facebook.

On 29 January, we paid a small fee to boost the survey's profile on Facebook with a targeted, wider audience. This elicited a further 50 responses.

## QUESTION ANALYSIS

### Q1 WHICH STREET DO YOU LIVE ON?

132 people answered this question. 7 did not respond.

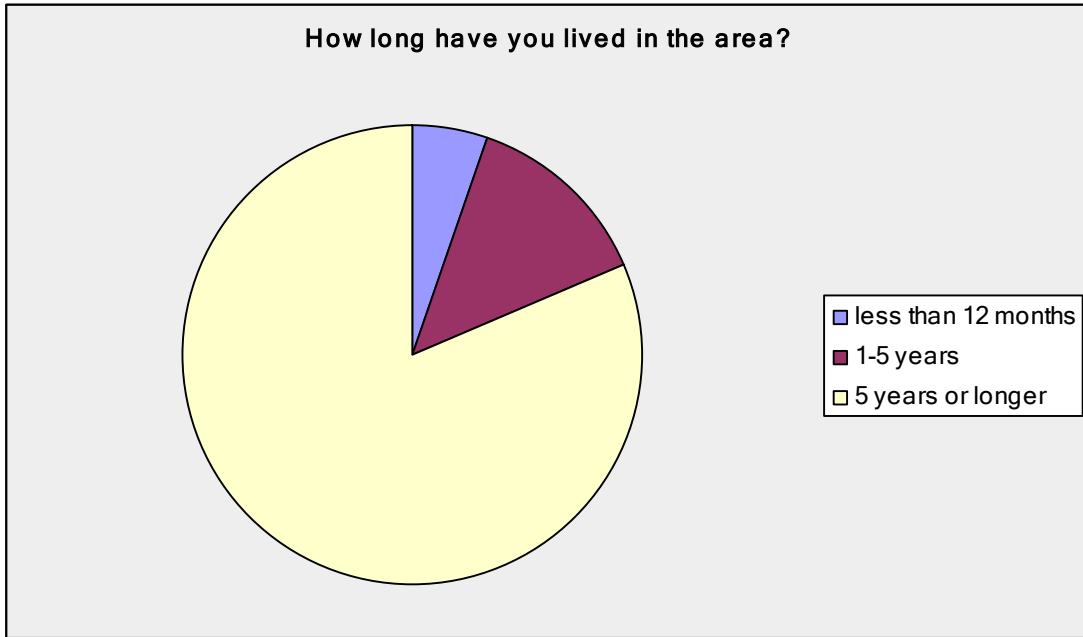
Of these, 73 lived in conservation areas, 55 lived outside a conservation area and 2 named streets outside the Borough. 7 provided insufficient details to assess whether their road was inside or outside the conservation area.

A comprehensive list of responses is attached at Annex A.

### Q2 HOW LONG HAVE YOU LIVED IN THE AREA?

135 people answered this question. 4 did not respond.

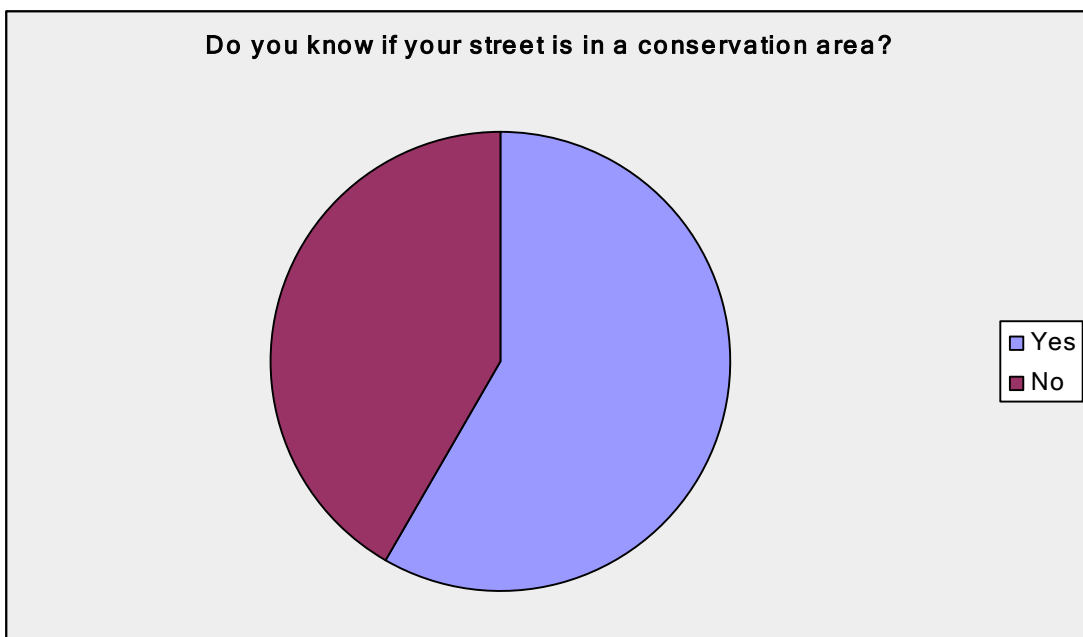
How long have you lived in the area?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
less than 12 months	5.2%	7
1-5 years	13.3%	18
5 years or longer	81.5%	110
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>135</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>4</b>



**Q3 DO YOU KNOW IF YOUR STREET IS IN A CONSERVATION AREA?**

137 people answered this question. 2 people did not respond.

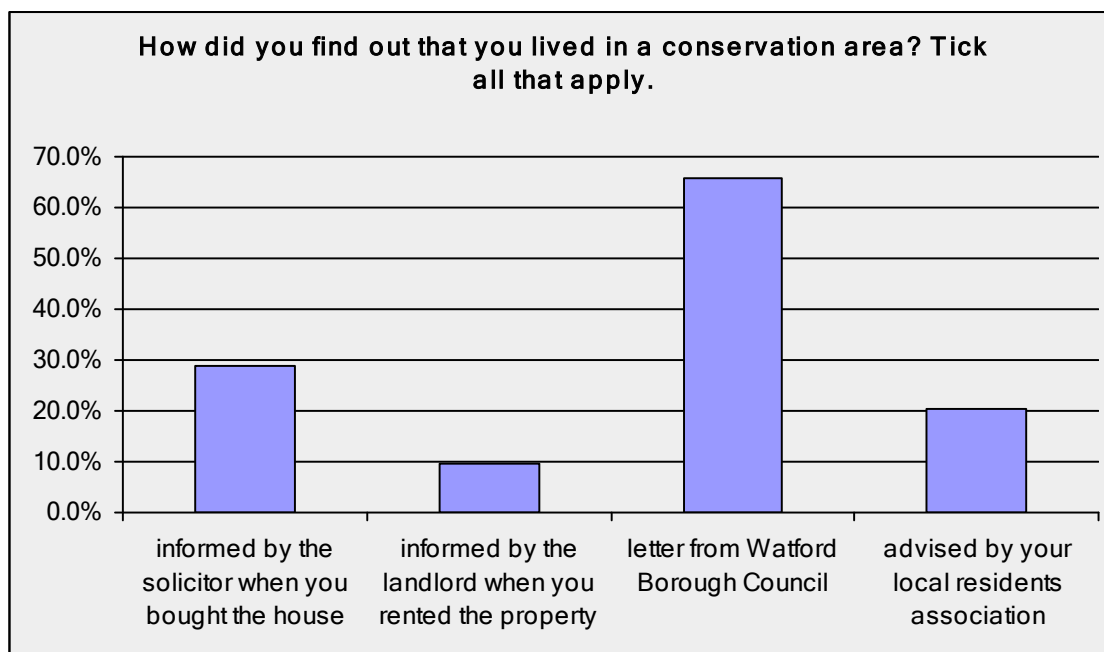
Do you know if your street is in a conservation area?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	58.4%	80
No	41.6%	57
<i>answered question</i>		<b>137</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>2</b>



**Q4 HOW DID YOU FIND OUT THAT YOU LIVED IN A CONSERVATION AREA? Tick all that apply.**

73 people answered this question. 66 did not respond.

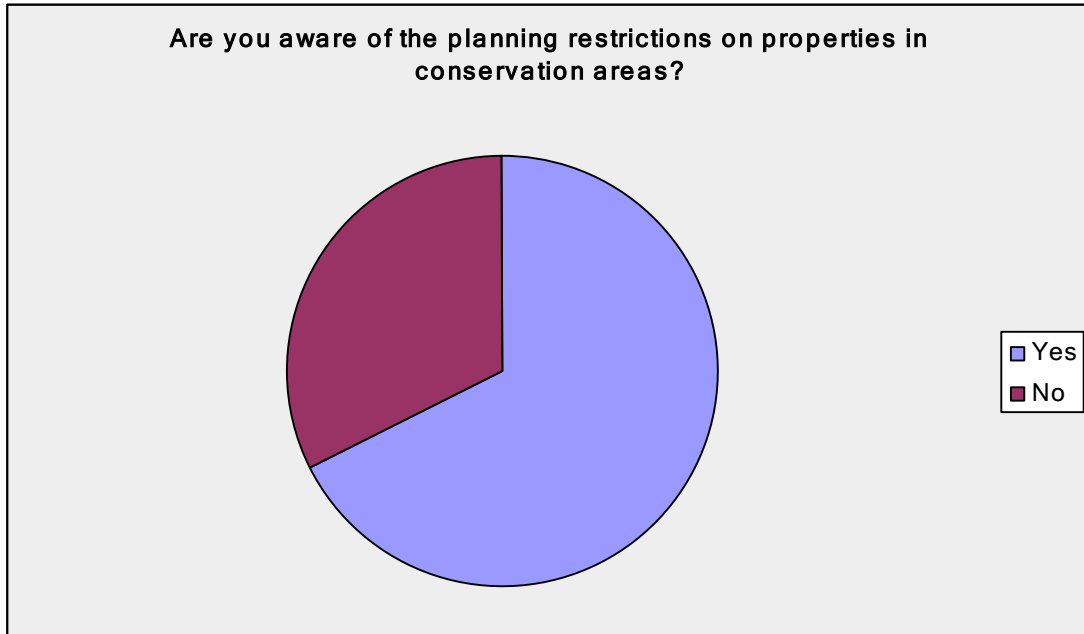
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
informed by the solicitor when you bought the house	28.8%	21
informed by the landlord when you rented the property	9.6%	7
letter from Watford Borough Council	65.8%	48
advised by your local residents association	20.5%	15
Other		8
<i>answered question</i>		<b>73</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>66</b>



**Q5 ARE YOU AWARE OF THE PLANNING RESTRICTIONS ON PROPERTIES IN CONSERVATION AREAS?**

120 people answered this question. 19 did not respond.

Are you aware of the planning restrictions on properties in conservation areas?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	67.5%	81
No	32.5%	39
<i>answered question</i>		<b>120</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>19</b>



**Q6 DO YOU HAVE EXAMPLES OF WHEN PLANNING RESTRICTIONS HAVE BEEN USED?**

71 people answered this question. 68 people did not respond.

Do you have examples of when planning restrictions have been used?	
Answer Options	Response Count
	71
<i>answered question</i>	<b>71</b>
<i>skipped question</i>	<b>68</b>

Examples of the types of issues cited included:

- Inappropriate developments, which were out of keeping with the area
- Height and size of extensions and new buildings
- Flat conversions
- Replacement doors and windows
- Porches
- Loft conversions, including the use of dormer windows
- Installation of solar panels
- Exterior brickwork and paintwork
- Impacts on wildlife and the Green Belt
- Siting of mobile homes.

**Q7 DO YOU HAVE EXAMPLES OF WHEN ACTION HAS BEEN TAKEN TO RECTIFY INAPPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENTS OR ALTERATIONS WHERE YOU LIVE?**

65 people answered this question, of whom 21 provided examples. 74 people did not respond.

Do you have examples of when action has been taken to rectify inappropriate developments or alterations where you live?	
Answer Options	Response Count
	65
<i>answered question</i>	65
<i>skipped question</i>	74

Examples included –

**Developments in Conservation Areas**

- community campaigned against an inappropriate proposed development which was eventually refused permission
- Council firm in refusing inappropriate developments
- series of applications refused before a suitable development was agreed

**Use of materials**

- replacement windows in sliding sash style; improvement on previous uPVC designs
- new house had to use same style bricks to existing properties
- new windows

**Enforcement**

- location of satellite dishes

**Q8 DO YOU HAVE ANY OTHER COMMENTS ABOUT CONSERVATION AREAS?**

77 people answered this question, of whom 70 provided comments. 62 did not respond.

Do you have any other comments about conservation areas?	
Answer Options	Response Count
	77
<i>answered question</i>	77
<i>skipped question</i>	62

## Comments included

### More / expansion of Conservation Areas

- Would like more of Nascot to be included in the conservation area
- More conservation areas would help maintain the character of Watford
- Oxhey conservation area should be extended to the railway

### Communication

- Unaware conservation areas existed
- Aware of restrictions in conservation areas, but surprised that there appear to be none on properties adjacent to conservation areas or overlooking them
- Make the Management Plan simpler and show the relevance to the owner of the property (advantages and restrictions)
- People moving in unaware the property is in a conservation area; leaflet could be available from estate agents
- Residents living in a conservation area should be informed regularly
- Insufficient time to study draft consultation and respond
- Provide information about how houses should be renovated, e.g. provide photos of how windows used to look to enable residents to match as closely as possible
- Unsure if road is in conservation area
- More information about designated areas would be helpful
- More information about what can and can't be done to property
- Lack of resident education

### Maintenance of properties

- Council should require people to carry out maintenance on property
- Concerned that the landlord will not maintain the property
- Some financial help or grants should be available for people who have to comply with costly rules on alterations
- Grants needed to help people put in original features
- Concerned about state of property / land / structures in conservation areas
- Trees need to be pollarded / pruned
- Should not be unreasonable additional expenditure for residents to upgrade or improve their homes
- Four bins in front of a property, solar panels and a TV aerial on the roof change appearance more than a satellite dish
- Concerned about a property in the conservation area which appears neglected since its recent sale
- More appropriate street lamps
- Pavements need to be maintained



### Developments in conservation areas

- New developments lose an area its character and sense of community
- Demolition of old large houses and replacement with flats must stop
- Inappropriate developments not in keeping with conservation area
- People should seek planning permission to put things up
- New developments should be designed to match the character of current properties
- Properties turned into multi occupancy dwellings adversely affect the character of an area
- Planning conditions not monitored for compliance nor enforced
- Restrictions on new buildings stopped a new development being built higher and less sympathetic to the surroundings
- Installation engineer ignored comments when told the conservation area did not allow the work he was doing
- Frustrating not to be allowed same dormer extension as neighbour, but builder allowed to build two houses not in keeping with neighbouring properties
- Proposed development looks too modern for the style of the conservation area
- More concerted determination needed by town planners to agree appropriate developments when proposed by large companies

### Developments next to conservation areas

- Lack of restrictions for properties / developments next to and overlooking conservation areas
- Inappropriate developments in neighbouring areas not in keeping with conservation areas
- Developments next to conservation areas have an impact on them
- New building outside conservation area will have an adverse effect on residents in the conservation area
- Area previously in conservation area now outside and planning permission sought for huge block of flats

### Against conservation areas

- Council able to control the population
- Some existing policies ridicule integrity of conservation areas
- Hard pressed to find properties with all original Victorian features and materials
- Arbitrary selection of streets to be part of conservation areas
- Emphasis is only on the look from the front
- Red tape and bureaucratic process
- Pain to get approval from Council; takes too long
- Too restrictive to home improvements; too expensive to apply for planning permission each time

## Support for conservation areas

- Place is lovely and have a friendly community
- Hope always kept a conservation area
- Lovely living in wonderful area, lovely buildings
- Important to preserve the character of these areas
- Vital in conserving areas of architectural interest and keeping the spirit and character of the area
- Important to retain conservation areas for the benefit of future generations
- They must be maintained, especially in built up areas
- Wonderful living in a conservation area
- Broadly speaking in favour of them, but in some areas brought in too late to save the character
- Like the way the character of area is protected
- Like living in a conservation area; restrictions are appropriate; they preserve the valuable character of the area
- Very positive about them
- Conservation areas important to the well-being of people
- Fantastic move, long overdue
- Essential to protect character of the area
- Helpful to try to preserve the identity of particular areas
- Like living in a conservation area and would like it to remain

### **Q9 WOULD YOU LIKE THE COUNCIL TO CONTACT YOU IN THE FUTURE ABOUT CONSERVATION ISSUES?**

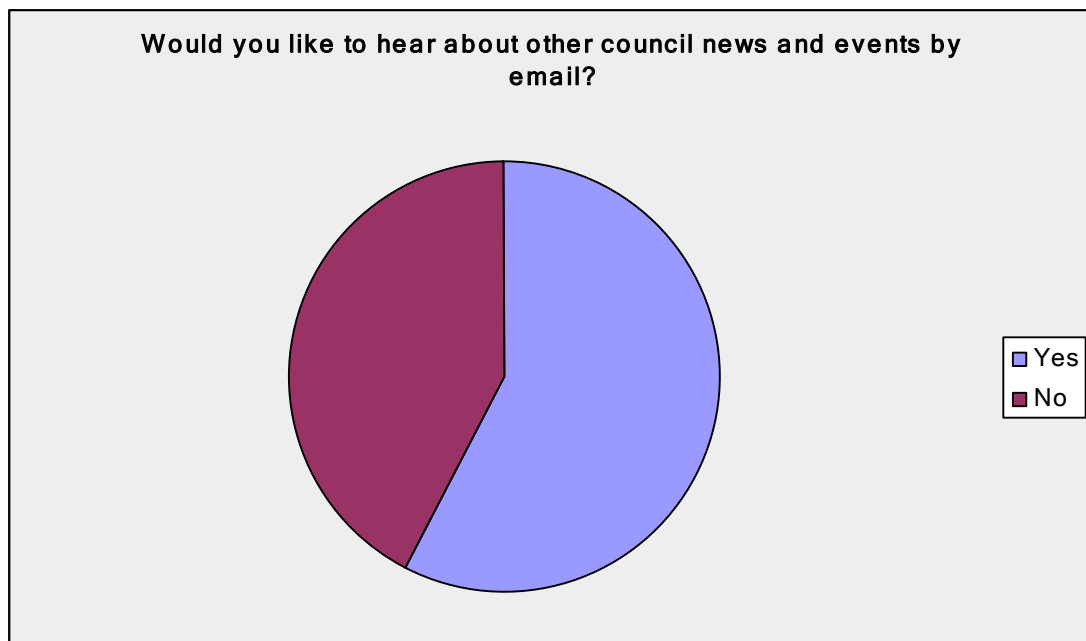
97 people answered this question. 42 people did not respond. The respondents' information will be forwarded to Planning Policy for inclusion in the service's database.

Would you like the council to contact you in the future about conservation issues?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	71.1%	69
No	28.9%	28
<i>answered question</i>		<b>97</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>42</b>

**Q10 WOULD YOU LIKE TO HEAR ABOUT OTHER COUNCIL NEWS AND EVENTS BY EMAIL?**

92 people answered this question. 47 people did not respond.

Would you like to hear about other council news and events by email?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	57.6%	53
No	42.4%	39
<i>answered question</i>		<b>92</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>47</b>



**Q11 PLEASE FILL IN YOUR CONTACT DETAILS BELOW.**

82 people answered this question. 57 people did not respond.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Name	98.8%	81
Address	100.0%	82
ZIP/Postal Code	96.3%	79
Email Address	86.6%	71
Phone Number	64.6%	53
<i>answered question</i>		<b>82</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>57</b>

**QUESTION 1  
WHICH STREET DO YOU LIVE ON?**

<b>WARD / CONSERVATION AREA</b>	<b>STREET NAME</b>	<b>NO. OF RESPONSES</b>
<b>Callowland (Nascot CA)</b>		0
<b>Central (Civic Core CA)</b>	Crossroads House, The Parade	1
<b>Central (Estcourt CA)</b>	Earl Street	2
	Estcourt Road	4
	Loates Lane	1
	Queens Road	2
	Sotheron Road	3
	Sutton Road	2
		14
<b>Central (High Street / King Street CA)</b>	Granville Road	1
<b>Central (St Mary's CA)</b>		1
<b>Nascot (Nascot CA)</b>		0
	Alexandra Road	1
	Church Road	6
	Cole Road	2
	Denmark Street	3
	Essex Road	4
	Langley Road	2
	Malden Road	3
	Nascot Place	2
	Nascot Road	1
	Nascot Street	6
		30
<b>Oxhey (Oxhey CA)</b>	Hillside Crescent	1
	Lower Paddock Road	5
	Upper Paddock Road	1
	Villiers Road	1
		8
<b>Oxhey (Watford Heath CA)</b>	Watford Heath	1
<b>Park (Grove Mill Lane CA)</b>		1
	Grove Mill Lane	4
<b>Vicarage (The Square CA)</b>		4
	Banbury Street	1
	Oxford Street	3
	Souldern Street	6
		10

**Woodside (Macdonnell Gardens CA)**

Macdonnell Gardens 4

**Streets outside conservation areas**

Beechwood Rise 1  
Bradshaw Road 1  
Bruce Grove 1  
Bucks Avenue 1  
Cannon Road 1  
Cassiobury Drive 1  
Chenies Way 1  
Chester Road 1  
Colnhurst Road 1  
Croxley View 1  
Dowry Walk 1  
Eastbury Road 2  
Eastfield Avenue 1  
Ebury Road 1  
Edward Amey Close 1  
Field End Close 1  
Gadswell Close 1  
Gladstone Road 1  
Grover Road 1  
Harwoods Road 1  
Hillrise Avenue 2  
Lamb Close 1  
Langley Road 1  
Longspring 1  
Lowson Grove 1  
Market Street 1  
Marlborough Road 1  
Maytree Crescent 1  
Merton Road 1  
Moor View 1  
North Approach 1  
Oxhey Road 3  
Parkside Drive 2  
Pinner Road (not in CA) 1  
Princes Avenue 1  
Queenswood Crescent 1  
Raphael Drive 1  
Ridge Lane 1  
The Ridgeway 1  
Royal Court, Queen Marys Avenue 1  
Sandringham Road 1  
Shakespeare Street 1  
Southwold Road 1  
Tucker Street 1  
Tudor Walk 1  
Wellington Road 1  
Wentworth Close 1  
West Street 1

<b>Streets outside Borough</b>	Whippendell Road		1
	Wiggenhall Road		1
		55	
<b>Anonymous</b>	St George's Drive, Carpenders Park		1
	Vivian Gardens		1
		2	
	Pinner Road		1
	Church Road		1
	Anonymous		5
	In conservation area		2
			<hr/>
			139

**MANAGEMENT OF CONSERVATION AREAS TASK GROUP  
SURVEY OF COUNCILLORS' VIEWS, JANUARY 2016**

1. Is there a conservation area in your ward?

- Yes
- No

2. Which conservation area(s) do you represent?

- Civic Core (Central, Park)
- Estcourt (Central)
- Grove Mill Lane (Park)
- High Street/King Street (Central)
- MacDonnell Gardens (Woodside)
- Nascot (Nascot, Callowland)
- Oxhey (Oxhey)
- St Mary's (Central)
- The Square (Vicarage)
- Watford Heath (Oxhey)


3. How did you find out that you had a conservation area in your ward?

- live in the ward
- informed by residents or a residents' group
- informed by Council officers
- other (please give details)


4. Are you aware of the planning restrictions on properties in conservation areas?

- Yes
- No

5. Do you feel, or have you been notified by residents, that there have been inappropriate developments or alterations to properties in Watford's conservation areas? (please give examples and ward name)

6. Are you aware of any action taken to enforce planning restrictions or rectify inappropriate developments or alterations in Watford's conservation areas? (please give examples and ward names)

7. Do you have any other views or comments about Watford's conservation areas?

8. Do you have any residents in your ward who take a particular interest in conservation issues and would be interested in being contacted in the future?

9. Please provide the following details:

Name

Ward