

# PROPOSED WATLANDS PARK CONSERVATION AREA

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## 1. Introduction

The proposed Watlands Park Conservation Area is located approximately one and a half miles north of Newcastle under Lyme Town Centre in Staffordshire, between the urban villages of Wolstanton and Porthill.

Conservation Areas are defined as “areas of special architectural or historic interest the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”. Local planning authorities are required to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas and must pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

The purpose of this Proposal is to provide a good basis for planning decisions and for development proposals in the area in the future. The proposal will inform the production of a management plan for the area. Once agreed by the Planning Committee of the Borough Council, the Draft Proposal and Management Plan will be discussed with the wider community.

### Planning Policy Context

These documents should be read in conjunction with the wider policy framework as set out in various policy documents. The Development Plan for the Borough currently consists of the Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Core Spatial Strategy and saved Local and Structure Plan Policies. More information about the planning system can be found on the Borough Council's website: [www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/planning](http://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/planning)

These documents will therefore provide a firm basis on which applications for development within the Conservation Areas can be assessed. The governments online Planning Practice Guidance is a valuable and accessible resource <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/> and Historic England (formerly English Heritage) guidance sets out the importance of appraisals and management plans, [www.historicengland.org.uk](http://www.historicengland.org.uk). Additional historic and archaeological information can be obtained from the Historic Environment Record (HER) which is held at Staffordshire County Council. The Council has a Register of Locally Important Building and Structures. Information about the Register and the current list is available to view online at [www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/localregister](http://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/localregister).

It is important to note that no proposal can ever be completely comprehensive. If a building, feature or space is not mentioned this should not be taken to imply that it is of no interest.

## 2. Summary of Significance

The proposed Watlands Park Conservation Area is significant for the following reasons:

- It represents a well preserved example of a principally late Victorian/Edwardian planned suburban development.
- It offers a high quality and characterful environment marked by tree-lined avenues and substantial residential properties of pleasingly varied design.
- It retains a mix of distinctive high quality Victorian and Edwardian detached, semi-detached and terraced properties, creatively embellished with many original features intact, such as tile patterning, decorative banding, faience work, ornamental fenestration, clay tiles and boundary walls with piers.
- Significant history as the area was developed in stages from the grounds of Watlands House, and features several examples of the work of noted Potteries architect Absalom Reade Wood (Middleport Pottery, Burslem School of Art, Tunstall Park et al), including his own house, 'Hillcrest'.

This proposal suggests that the key issues in the area are:

- Protection of the townscape and built features of the Conservation Area including the trees, landscape and front boundary walls.
- Use of modern materials on historic buildings, such as uPvc windows and doors and inappropriate changes to historic buildings.
- Consideration of additions to the Register of Locally Important Buildings and Structures.
- Removal of significant trees.

### **3. Location and Setting**

The proposed Watlands Park Conservation Area forms a rough rectangle is located between - and including - the section of Wolstanton High Street which runs between Keeling Street and Oaklands Avenue on the north side, and Marsh Avenue and Watlands Avenue on the south side, and Albert Terrace to include the properties at the lower end of Silverdale Road which are in effect a continuation of Albert Terrace and run down to Wolstanton Marsh. The area thus includes the whole of Marsh Avenue, Woodland Avenue, Watlands Avenue and the section of Park Avenue between its intersection with High Street and its intersection with Clarence Street.

Three large detached properties at the High Street Street end of Woodland and Park Avenues are now used as offices; one house on Woodland Avenue is a specialist residential care unit; the rest of the area is fully residential.

#### 4. Historic development

*[\*Extensive reference will be made here to the only known academic work entirely concerned with Watlands Park, Andrew Dobraszczyc's printed handout for his Watlands Estate WEA course of circa 1992. This includes maps, plans and other reproduced primary source material. A copy forms an appendix to this proposal; notes in the text citing it are in the format Dobraszczyc 1992, p1 etc]*

Wolstanton is one of Newcastle's earliest known settlements and is recorded in the Domesday Book of 1087:

WOLSTANTON. Earl Algar held it. 2 hides, with its dependencies  
In lordship 2 ploughs; 14 villagers and 2 smallholders with a  
priest have 8 ploughs. Woodland 1 league long and 1 furlong  
wide. Value before 1066, 100s; now £6

Historically Watlands Park was farmland, running down to Wolstanton Marsh and Dimsdale. Watlands House, built in the late eighteenth century on a site at the head of the present Lodge Grove and extended in the first half of the nineteenth century, was one of North Staffordshire's noted gentlemen's houses. The area which forms the proposed Conservation Area, closest to the house, thus became park rather than agricultural land. Only a small part of Watlands House's boundary walls now survives: much built around and having fallen into multi-occupancy, the house was finally demolished circa 1951.

*(Dobraszczyc 1992, pp2 & 20)*

The present estate was laid out when the Watlands House grounds were gradually sold off, beginning in 1875/6. The southern side of Park Avenue was built up first, followed by Woodland Avenue (originally Woodlands Parade), Albert Terrace, Marsh Avenue (originally Marsh Road), the northern side of Park Avenue and finally Watlands Avenue, which had not formed part of the initial sale of building plots.

*(Dobraszczyc 1992, pp10-12)*

However, not all the plots offered for sale were purchased immediately, or then quickly built on, so that the proposed conservation area offers a fascinating and generally well-preserved history of changing architectural fashions between the 1870s and the First World War (with now-maturing later infill where older properties were lost to subsidence or large gardens sold for development), from grand redbrick and early Mock Tudor villas to Arts and Crafts cottage-style semi-detached properties.

Originally all four avenues plus Albert Terrace were gated but only one photograph, of the Park Avenue gates at the High Street end, is known to survive.

'There were similar gates at the end of each street on the estate in the 1880s, though the gates at the end of Marsh Avenue and Albert Terrace had been removed by the end of the 1890s. The gates at the end of Park Avenue and Woodland Parade [now Woodland Avenue] survived until the inter-war period and the the last gates at the end of Woodland Parade appear to have been removed in about 1940.'

*(Dobraszczyc 1992, p13)*

The section of the High Street included in the proposed Conservation Area was mainly developed in the same period, and aesthetically is very much of a piece with the avenues, two of whose focal point buildings - noted below - face on to the High Street.

The Extensive Urban Survey for Newcastle under Lyme states that overall there is a low potential for the survival of below ground archaeology in the area. However further research will always help with the understanding of any unknown heritage assets.

## **5. Spatial and Character analysis**

### **Topography**

The topography of the proposed Conservation Area is generally flat, with a slight descent towards Wolstanton Marsh. Vantage points close to the area give outstanding views of the northern part of the Etruria Valley, the remaining visible parts of its important industrial heritage and rising open country beyond towards Mow Cop.

### **Layout and street pattern**

Street layout is a planned grid, encompassing the area between the pre-existing High Street section - historically the main road between Newcastle and the northern Pottery towns - to the north, Silverdale Road (formerly Robinson's Lane) to the south and the edge of Wolstanton Marsh to the west. Plots and therefore houses are largest on Park Avenue: the plots in Watlands Park were sold with a stipulated minimum front garden depth and now feature mature trees and shrubberies. Woodland Avenue had a smaller but still larger than average stipulated minimum front garden depth. Albert Terrace, Marsh Avenue and Watlands Avenue have smaller front gardens and a higher density of houses but remain a cohesive part of the original estate, as intended. Plot sizes on the High Street vary, from landmark buildings too large for modern residential use to a run of more modest, but elegantly designed semis facing them.

### **Open spaces, trees and landscape**

The proposed Conservation Area has mature trees lining Park Avenue, part of the High Street and parts of Woodland and Watlands Avenue, some of which are subject to Tree Preservation Orders. Several of these are believed to be survivors of the original planting when the Watlands Park estate was laid out. In general the proposed Conservation Area has the sense of a tranquil, somewhat secluded enclave. Wolstanton Marsh, on the edge of the proposed Conservation Area, is very much part of its landscape. The back lanes between Park and Woodland Avenues and Woodland and Marsh Avenues - both of which have exits on to Albert Terrace - have become habitats for small wildlife as they have been used less for rear access to properties and their garages or coach houses. The back lanes are unadopted by the Council and maintained by residents.

### **Focal points, focal buildings, views and vistas**

The largest house in Watlands Park, now the Co-op Funeral Home, stands back from the junction of Park Avenue and High Street, next to 'Hillcrest,' AR Wood's own house, completed in 1891. Both have piecemeal additions from their time in institutional/commercial use but retain their visual integrity as houses. Within the residential streets, much of the area's especial feel comes from smaller vistas: original chimneys, the mix of roof lines and features unique to each house or pair of houses, the large front gardens and for much of the year, the trees.

### **Boundary features**

There is a variety of boundaries in the Proposed Conservation Area. Some original stone and brick walls remain in their original form on all of the roads, and many of these retain their original stone piers, with embellishments. There are many well-established hedges



and trees as house boundary features and they help to unify the area especially where there are modern infill buildings but the historic boundaries remain in situ.

### **Public Realm**

The pavements of the proposed Conservation Area are in a poor state, tarmaced rather than slabbed with the tarmac in roughly-patched and potholed condition. Lamp standards are modern and unremarkable. Highway and commercial signage make for a cluttered environment on the High Street.

## **6. Quality and Character of Buildings**

The historic buildings and structures in the area contribute greatly to making the area aesthetically special. Nothing is nationally Listed; the combined effect of the buildings and streetscapes in Watlands Park is its particular strength, retaining as it does many architecturally distinctive and well preserved houses.

There is a unified palette of materials in the area - presumed to have been sourced mainly locally - which gives a sense of coherence despite the changes in style during the forty years of the estate's main period of development, so that softened gothic detailing from the 1870s sits alongside hanging-tiled house fronts and flamboyant 'Mock Tudor' black-and-white, and half a generation later, roughcast rendering and vernacular woodwork in a garden suburb style. The terraced villas on Albert Terrace are only uniform in short runs: there are Dutch gables and other detailing unusual in similar streets, and on Park Avenue a lovely understated pair of small detached Art Deco houses. This sense of architectural layering is quietly very special.

In terms of joinery, a high number of the timber windows and doors are still intact, with survival rates lower as the properties get smaller. Some have been replaced with uPvc; some of these with altered window openings. Taking Watlands Park as a whole, a sufficient proportion of fenestration in the older properties has retained its original character.

At the heart of the proposed Conservation Area, 7 Park Avenue, a particularly original red-brick detached property with large side gardens, and retaining its coach house intact, is currently in a vulnerable state of repair.

### **Businesses**

There are a number of businesses, noted above, at the High Street end of the proposed Conservation Area.

### **Neutral Buildings**

The post-1945, principally post-1960s infill buildings and extensions within the proposed Conservation Area generally neither contribute to nor detract from the character of the area and these are considered to be neutral buildings. However it must be noted that in terms of architectural quality, most fall well short of the original built environment.

## 7. Summary of Issues

The key issues facing Watlands Park can be summarised as follows:

- Conservation of the area and its original properties in a way which is sensitive and appropriate.
- Actively ensuring the future of properties at risk, including large gardens in danger of plot subdivision.
- Conserving the best of the Public Realm and actively seeking to bring the worst up to a good standard.
- Loss of important trees

This desirable state can only be achieved by continual vigilance by concerned local inhabitants, informed decisions by planning officers and positive action by enforcement where necessary, all acting in liaison for the common benefit. Watlands Park Residents' Association regards engagement with this process as a vital part of its remit.

### Opportunities and Constraints

- Inappropriate signage on businesses occupying former residential sites and action needs to be taken to improve or remove the signage.
- Loss of historic features such as windows and doors. Where possible these should be retained or opportunities found to reinstate such features.
- The effect of permitted development can be harmful by incrementally removing significant historic features from buildings. An Article 4 Direction should be considered to tighten control over important buildings and frontages which are not protected from harmful change.
- Appropriate use of materials when altering or extending properties within the Proposed Conservation Area.
- Retain important trees and landscape features, on public and private ground within the Area.

## **Section 2: Conservation Area Management Plan**

### **1. Introduction**

The purpose is to provide a framework for further actions which although primarily the responsibility of the Borough Council, will also depend on the cooperation and enthusiasm of local people and local organisations/institutions. This Plan is informed by Section 1 of this document which identified the special character and significance of the Conservation Area.

The effectiveness of the Proposed Watlands Park Conservation Area's designation will depend on the way it is managed by the Borough Council, residents and local businesses.

Government policy guidance on Conservation Areas is contained in National Planning Policy Framework, where the government is still promoting informed and evidenced based conservation. It considers that parts of the environment which have significance due to their historic, archaeological, architectural or artistic interest are called heritage assets whether formally designated or not. These assets promote a sense of place and contribute towards the aims of sustainability.

Government policy has made it clear that Conservation Areas are not areas of preservation and that change is an inevitable fact of modern life. The challenge is therefore to manage that change in a manner which respects the special historic and architectural qualities of a place. The context for these policies is provided by the Local Development Framework (LDF) and the Core Spatial Strategy.

Local authorities have a duty to designate areas as 'Conservation Areas' which they consider have special historic and/or aesthetic significance.

#### Consultation

The involvement of the local community - in particular Watlands Park Residents' Association - in the formulation and delivery of these documents helps to strengthen the status and impact of Appraisals and Management Plans. The Residents Association has played a significant role in instigating this process to propose a new Conservation Area and in writing this review of the area, including research and providing the material included in the documents. A full period of consultation will take place with the documents to provide opportunities for the wider local community to input further into the documents. Following this the final document will go back to Committee before going to Cabinet for final approval and adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document.

Both documents will be of use to the Borough Council when determining planning applications for change within or on the edges of the Conservation Area, and for property owners and their agents when considering schemes for alteration or new development.

\* The proposed actions contained in the Management Plan will be undertaken using existing Council resources unless otherwise stated.

## **2. The implications of Conservation Area designation**

Designation as a Conservation Area brings a number of specific statutory provisions aimed at assisting the “preservation and/or enhancement” of the area. The overriding policy is that new development should pay special regard to the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.

Other effects are:-

- Extra publicity must be given to planning applications affecting Conservation Areas. This is done through a site notice and an advertisement in the local newspaper.
- Permission is required for the demolition of most unlisted buildings in a Conservation Area (except small structures) and the local authority may take enforcement action or consider criminal prosecution if permission is not obtained.
- Written notice must be given to the Borough Council before works are carried out to any tree in the area to give the Council the opportunity to include the tree within a Tree Preservation Order.
- The Borough Council may take steps to ensure that a building in a Conservation Area is kept in good repair through the use of Urgent Works Notices and Amenity Notices.
- The energy conservation expectations of the Building Regulations (Part L) do not necessarily apply to buildings within a Conservation Area.
- Powers exist for local authorities, Historic England or the Heritage Lottery Fund to provide financial grant schemes to help with the upkeep of buildings in Conservation Areas, if the area is economically deprived.
- The Council has a Historic Building Grant Fund for the repair and reinstatement of buildings and structures which are considered as heritage assets, namely Listed Buildings, buildings in Conservation Areas and on the Council’s Register of Locally Important Buildings.

It is always a good idea to check with the Planning Service before carrying out any work and if you need any advice on any planning issues.

Where a building is designated as a Listed Building separate legislation applies to all internal and external alterations which affect the special architectural or historic interest of the building and will probably require Listed Building Consent. Planning permission is also needed for all proposed buildings in the garden of a domestic Listed Building including gas/oil containers. Listed Building Consent is practically always required for the installation of `antennas` and if the Borough Council considers that the installation will have an adverse effect on the special interest of the building, consent will usually be refused.

### 3. The Management of the Historic Environment

The Borough Council has policies which are aimed at preserving the significance and character and appearance of Conservation Areas.

Each application has to be determined on its own merits but much can be achieved by having a clear interpretation of statutes, detailed policy and guidance and training to help elected Councillors and officers to work within these constraints. Development proposals can have an effect on a Conservation Area even when they are some distance outside it. In such cases, the duty to pay special attention to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area still applies. Alterations to the external appearance of a property often require planning permission.

#### **Action 1 The Borough Council will adopt a consistent interpretation of what it considers to be a `material` change in the external appearance of a building.**

Certain works to Single dwelling houses within a Conservation Area are considered "permitted development" that enable some alterations to be carried out without the need for planning permission. These can include changes to windows and doors, roofing materials or construction of minor extensions. Although they may be minimal in each case, such alterations can have a cumulative effect that is damaging to historic areas. In summary:

- Planning permission is needed for extensions to houses in Conservation Areas if it extends the side wall of the house or if it has more than one storey to the rear and if it exceeds certain length and height restrictions.
- Planning permission is needed for external cladding to houses using stone, artificial stone, pebble dash, render, timber, plastic or tiles.
- Planning permission is needed for any alteration to the roof of a house in a Conservation Area.
- Planning permission is needed for the erection of any structure within the curtilage of a house in a Conservation Area if the structure proposed would be on land to the side or front of the house. This is especially important for sheds, garages and other outbuildings in gardens.
- Planning permission is required for satellite dishes and antennas if they are mounted on a chimney, wall or roof slope which faces onto and is visible from a highway or a building which exceeds 15 metres in height. In these cases, planning permission would not normally be approved. Conventional TV aerials and their mountings and poles are not considered to be `development` and therefore planning permission is not required.
- With commercial properties, such as shops and pubs, planning permission is generally required for alterations to these buildings.
- Solar PV or thermal equipment needs planning permission if it is to be located on a wall or roof slope of the main elevation of the main house or outbuilding or on a Listed Building or a building in its garden.
- Within Conservation Areas, lopping or felling a tree greater than 75 mm. diameter at 1.5 metres above the ground requires six weeks' notice to be given to the Borough Council before starting the work. This provides the Borough Council with an opportunity of assessing the tree to see if it makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the Conservation Area, in which case a Tree Preservation Order may be served.

## Article 4 Directions

Where minor development is considered to be harming the character of an area, an Article 4 Direction can be made by the Borough Council which removes permitted development rights. This does not mean that development will not be possible but it does mean that planning permission has to be sought for certain changes so that consideration can be given to the merits of the proposal and for them to be considered against the conservation interests of the area. Certain buildings are more vulnerable than others at certain times and it is considered that a No 7 Park Avenue, a redundant building which is changing hands regularly at the moment is at risk from significant change which could harm the character of the area.

For example under an Article 4 Direction planning permission would then be required for

- All extensions whatever the size including porches on the front of the building
- Changing roof materials and insertion of rooflights on front-facing roof slope
- Replacing windows or doors on the front elevation
- Painting a house, and the removal or partial demolition of a chimney.
- The erection, alteration or removal of a wall, gate or fence at the front of the house can also be controlled as well as demolition (front means facing a public highway or road).

**Action 2 The Borough Council will propose an Article 4 Direction within the proposed Watlands Park Conservation Area for certain and relevant types of development on the majority of properties in residential use in the Conservation Area as shown on the plan, in order to seek to retain historic and architectural features which combine to give the Conservation Area its special character and significance. Full consultation will be undertaken with those affected.**

### **Enforcement Strategy**

Planning permission is not always sought or implemented correctly. Here it is important that enforcement action is considered and if action where needed is taken. This does reinforce that the development control process is fair and should be followed.

As well as following the Cabinet Office Enforcement Concordat, which sets out best practice principles for enforcement like openness, consistency and proportionality, the Borough Council has its own local Planning Enforcement Policy and within this historic building and conservation matters are given a greater priority. Usually issues are resolved through effective communication but this is not always the case.

**Action 3 Where appropriate the Council will take enforcement action against unauthorised development within the proposed Watlands Park Conservation Area.**

### **Promotion and awareness**

Some degree of change is inevitable in Conservation Areas and the issue is often not so much whether change should happen, but how it is undertaken. Owners and residents can minimise the negative effects of change by employing skilled advice when preparing development proposals and by avoiding unrealistic aspirations.

It is important that the community should understand the significance of their surroundings if they are to play their part. There is a clear need to publish information

on the history of each Conservation Area and its special qualities. This could be an effective outcome of the character appraisal process. There is also a significant role for amenity societies and other stakeholders to explain what matters, what is possible, what is expected and what has been achieved elsewhere.

**Action 4 The Borough Council will encourage and work with the community and other organisations to help recognise and manage the heritage assets in the proposed Conservation Area for future generations.**

**Action 5 The Borough Council will ensure that information is available to enable communities to understand the significance of their Conservation Areas and the consequences of living and working within them.**

Community involvement is an integral part of the planning process. The Borough Council has already established a Conservation Advisory Working Party, which considers all relevant applications and acts as an important interface between local understanding and council decision making.

**Action 6 The Council will continue supporting the Conservation Advisory Working Party and will continue to seek to ensure that the Working Party is given the opportunity of commenting on applications affecting the historic environment in the Borough.**

**Action 7 The Borough Council will consider increasing its offer of guidance and update its range of published guidance to include specific topics such as historic buildings and living in a Conservation Area.**



## **Control of historic buildings**

It is important that this historic environment continues to be recognised and that local policies are included in future policy documents for the future protection of Newcastle-under-Lyme's Conservation Areas and Listed Building entries. Listed Building Consent is required for the demolition alteration or extension of statutorily listed buildings. There is current guidance for owners of listed building on the Borough Councils website.

**Action 8 The Borough Council has placed information on its website on Listed Buildings and on the Conservation Areas in the Borough and this information should be updated and expanded upon.**

**Action 9 The Borough Council will continue to assess applications for Listed Building Consent in line with policy and guidance.**

## **Register of Locally Important Buildings and Structures**

There are buildings of local significance which, although not statutorily listed, are nonetheless important to the history and character and cultural value of the Borough.

The Register of Locally Important Buildings and Structures is a list of buildings which are of good design quality, attract appearance and historic interest which make a significant contribution to the character of the area. It is one way that the Council can help to identify buildings which are important to the character of the area and help to prevent harmful changes that would be detrimental to the character of the area. The current Register and information about the process by which buildings can be added to the Register can be seen at [www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/localregister](http://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/localregister).

No buildings currently included on this Register lie within the proposed Watlands Park Conservation Area, but the Watlands Park History Project Group has begun to compile a list of AR Wood houses, is researching other houses of particular interest and hopes to offer nominations for the register in future.

There are a number of buildings which have been identified on the Townscape Appraisal map as being positive buildings of townscape merit. Buildings here will vary in quality but will be good examples of relatively unaltered historic buildings. Where their style, materials and detailing provides the Conservation Area with interest and variety they will be considered for inclusion of the local Register during the next review process. Where a building has been heavily altered, and restoration would be impractical, they are excluded.

**Action 10 The Borough Council will consider all buildings identified as making a positive contribution to the character of the area for the local Register of Locally Important Buildings and Structures and will encourage the local community to suggest other buildings that might be eligible for inclusion on the Register.**

**Action 11 The Borough Council will ensure that the Register of Locally Important Buildings and Structures is continually updated.**

**Action 12 Positive buildings, buildings on the Council's local Register and Listed Buildings should be retained and their settings protected from unsympathetic development.**

## **Control and management of the natural environment**

Tree cover provides an important part of the proposed Conservation Area. These trees should be maintained, retained and replaced when appropriate. All trees in Conservation Areas are already automatically protected by the requirement to notify the Council of any intention to carry out works to trees. Tree Preservation Orders provide additional protection for significant trees or groups of trees and permission is required from the Council for any proposed works.

**Action 13 The Borough Council will continue to work with landowners to manage the trees within the Conservation Area in a way which recognises the important contribution they make to the character of the Conservation Area.**

#### **4. The Conservation Area Boundary**

The proposed Conservation Area boundary is based around the former estate of Watlands Park laid out at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and put up for auction in in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century when the first streets were laid out and building plots sold. Please see attached Plan for the suggested boundary of the proposed Conservation Area described in more detail in Section 3 and Section 4 of the Appraisal document.

#### **5. The setting of the Conservation Area**

Watlands Park has a large number of trees, particularly within but also on the edges of the Conservation Area. The combined effect of the trees, shrubs, gardens contributes to the especial character of the Conservation Area. These features are cherished by the local community and are generally well cared for.

#### **The control of new development**

New development should preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. It must respect the historic and architectural context and should not necessarily copy existing styles but create sensitive, sympathetic and good quality modern architecture so that the special character and appearance of the proposed Conservation Area is not downgraded or diluted, but reinforced, and enhanced whenever possible. The pattern and grain of the area is part of its special character and appearance and should be respected. It is important to have a good architect or advisor who understands the issues and context of Conservation Areas. New development should not increase the volume of development on the site and should be sympathetic to surrounding historic buildings in terms of scale materials and details. It should also respect views both within and into and out of the proposed Conservation Area.

The pressure for development in Watlands Park is mainly for changes of use, signage and extensions to existing buildings, but as noted above there is concern about the potential for over-dense infill and backland development - usually in the gardens of existing buildings which sit in spacious plots that contribute much to the area's character, which has evolved over many years. There is an existing policy which helps protect part of Park Avenue; this should help ensure that special attention is given to retaining this character.

#### **Demolition**

Permission is needed for demolition all buildings in the Conservation Area (over 115 cubic metres). Demolition of historically significant buildings within the Conservation Area will not be permitted unless the building to be demolished can be proven to have a harmful or negative effect. Partial demolition does not require permission, but some control will be exercised through an Article 4 Direction, particularly in relation to boundary walls and chimneys.

## **6. Implementation**

It is important that the proposed Watlands Park Conservation Area should be as self-sustaining as possible if it is to remain in its present state. Achieving this requires management to control any necessary changes so that its special character and appearance is not adversely affected. Success will require commitment by all Borough Council departments and their partners such as building control and the Highways Authority to ensure the sensitive exercise of controls, in the best interests of the Conservation Area, and the sensitive deployment of any resources which may become available. Success depends on the part played by other stakeholders: property owners, residents, businesses and amenity groups.

Those who live and work in the Conservation Area are encouraged to recognise the collective benefits they enjoy. For this they must understand the need to take a contextual view of proposals rather than acting in isolation. Change is inevitable in Conservation Areas but it is how rather than if it is undertaken. Employing skilled advice minimises the effects of these changes.

It is important that communities are well informed about the qualities of their Conservation Areas and of the opportunities for enhancing them. There is also a role for the Borough Council and other recognised community groups such as the Civic Society.

JF/28.3.16