

Potters Bar Darkes Lane (West) Conservation Area

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a conservation area?

A conservation area is described in law as 'an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. The form and layout of the buildings, streets, trees and open spaces all contribute to a local distinctiveness and individuality that defines an area like the new Darkes Lane (West) Conservation Area. The designation of a conservation area would help to ensure that these features are retained and enhanced for future generations to enjoy.

Why has the council designated this area as a new conservation area in Potters Bar?

The council has a statutory responsibility to review areas of special architectural or historic interest throughout the borough and can decide whether any new conservation areas should be created in order to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of that area. This is set out in Section 69 (2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

A conservation area assessment was carried out which defines the special historic and architectural interest of the area. It looks at the reasons why the area should be protected as a historically important part of the borough, and the ways in which its historic character could be conserved and enhanced for future generations. The process involved looking at the character of the area and buildings in and around The Avenue, Heath Drive, Manor Way and Mountway, taking into account the different features of the area.

Who undertook the assessment?

The assessment was commissioned by Hertsmere Borough Council and undertaken by the Built Environment Advisory and Management Service (BEAMS), part of the Hertfordshire Building Preservation Trust. BEAMS is independent of the council and currently advises the council on urban design and conservation.

What are the main recommendations of the assessment?

The main recommendation is to create a new conservation area to cover part of Darkes Lane and all of The Avenue, Heath Drive, Manor Way and Mountway, which are all part of the early 20th century Potters Bar Garden Estate development.

It is recommended that Cedar Close is not included in the conservation area because the design of the 1960s houses is not thought to be characteristic of the rest of the proposed conservation area.

What were the results of the public consultation?

Twelve letters or emails were received in response to the consultation, and many more people attended the exhibition events in November 2011. Two residents groups were represented, and other comments were from local residents. The majority of comments were in support of the new conservation area. Comments noted the importance of the presence of trees in the area, and of street furniture, including lamp posts and signage that should be sensitive to the conservation area character.

Some comments also requested other adjoining areas to be included in the proposed conservation area. These additional areas will not be included in the conservation area: the golf course, the east side of Darkes Lane, or the end of Billy Lows Lane, because the areas do not meet the requirements of being in a conservation area, or are of insufficient architectural and historic interest.

What does it mean now that Darkes Lane (West) is designated as a conservation area?

The designation ensures that the area is recognised, conserved and/or enhanced. The council has greater control over future development in the area and any development requiring planning permission would have to contribute to either enhancing or conserving the character and appearance of the area. Separate consent would be required for the demolition of buildings above a certain size and there would be a general presumption against allowing the redevelopment of houses in the conservation area. The designation also includes some proposals to enhance the area. The council would also have to be notified of proposed works to trees. It should be noted that house prices and council tax rates are not a consideration for the designation of any new conservation areas.

What types of restrictions are there to prevent development in the conservation area?

Planning permission would be required for some minor developments that would otherwise be permitted development and not require planning permission. These are as follows:

- The council must be provided with 6 weeks' notice, in writing, of an intention to carry out works to trees and may subsequently make a Tree Preservation Order to protect those trees concerned and prevent unsuitable works. Work must not be carried out to the trees during the six week period unless you receive agreement from the Council to do so.
- An application for Conservation Area Consent is needed before a building of more than 115 cubic metres in size within a conservation area can be demolished; and
- Planning consent is needed for a number of minor developments that would normally be permitted development, these are:
 - A loft conversion or the raising of any roof slope (though, roof light windows that protrude no more than 15cm outwards from the roof slope do not require permission);
 - Any extension projecting beyond the side of the original house;
 - Any rear extension of more than one storey;
 - Any outbuilding to the side of a house;
 - The cladding of any part of a dwelling house with stone, artificial stone, pebble dash, render, timber, plastic or tiles;
 - A satellite dish on a chimney, wall or roof slope which fronts – and is visible from – the road;
 - The installation of domestic microgeneration equipment, such as solar panels, which fronts – and is visible from – the road; and
 - Any chimney, flue or soil and vent pipe on the front or side of a house.

Generally, the council has a duty to conserve and enhance conservation areas within Hertsmere under the Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, and will pay regard to this duty when exercising its planning duties.

All householders are advised to contact the Council's Planning Unit before undertaking works that may need permission on telephone 020 8207 2277 or email planning@hertsmere.gov.uk.