



# Alcester

## Conservation Area



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# Alcester Conservation Area

The historic market town of Alcester's unique character derives from its strategic position on the Roman Icknield Street, combined with a medieval street pattern still populated by many fine secular buildings dating back to at least the 16th century. Half-timbered black and white houses jostle for attention alongside the later additions of stone, brick and stucco render. A rich array of exterior pastel shades both harmonises and differentiates the various building forms in the town centre, especially along High Street, Church Street and Henley Street in the vicinity of St Nicholas' church. The net result is a seamless ribbon of streetscapes with a wide range of architectural aesthetic and social interest.

The Conservation Area was originally designated in 1968 and reviewed with boundary revisions in 1994 and 2008.

There are several strong and prevailing characteristics, which combine to give Alcester its special sense of place and cultural significance:

- St Nicholas church; dominant vertical form of the tower and offset clock face act as a focal point for the surrounding streetscape.

St Nicholas Church framed by trees, with the Rectory in the background



- Excellent surviving examples of period timber framed buildings still set in their traditional narrow and deep, medieval burgage plots.

Church Street corner onto High Street



- Revised Conservation Area Boundary September 2008
- Listed Building

Where property boundaries define the limits of the Conservation Area, all features forming the boundary (e.g. walls, hedges, trees etc.) are assumed to be wholly within the Conservation Area.

Structures deemed listed by virtue of standing within the curtilage of Listed Buildings, and extensions to Listed Buildings, are not shown in red on the Conservation Area Plan. However, they are subject to Listed Building legislation and may have significance within the Conservation Area.

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Arrow Lodge and river crossing at Gunnings Bridge



- Relationship of built and natural environments alongside the river.

- Buildings from the late-Georgian and Regency periods exhibit an array of exterior pastel shades and high quality brickwork. Church Street



- Well-preserved medieval street pattern with interconnecting turies (passageways) between adjacent plots.

Oak Tury looking down to Gas House Lane



View up High Street

- Excellent examples of late-Victorian and Edwardian traditional shop fronts along the High Street.



# Living & Working in a Conservation Area

This leaflet has been produced by Stratford-on-Avon District Council to advise you of some of the opportunities and restrictions that are brought about by living and working in one of the 75 Conservation Areas within the District.

The statutory definition of a Conservation Area is an “area of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance” (Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990). This special character comes, not only from the quality of the buildings within it, but their relationship to each other and with open spaces, views into and out of the area, street patterns and features, trees, archaeology and historic landscapes.

Conservation Area designation should enable the proper management of change in historic places not preserve them in time or stifle new development.

If you live, work or own property in a Conservation Area, certain responsibilities are placed both on you and the District Council to preserve or enhance that special character and appearance:

- In many cases, you must apply for approval to extend or demolish all or a significant part of your property.
- You must notify the District Council if you wish to undertake pruning works or to fell a tree.
- Proposals for new development, signs and advertisements will need to be sensitive to their surroundings.
- Extra planning controls apply over some building works.

Conservation Areas normally contain a large number of listed buildings. These are either individual buildings or building groups which are of special architectural or historic interest. If you own, or live within the curtilage (i.e. immediate boundary of), a listed building, you should be aware that special legal protection applies.

Further details are given below.

## What if my property isn't listed? Do special planning controls affect me?

Unlisted buildings normally enjoy what are called ‘permitted development rights’ which allow some development to take place without the need for planning permission. However, you may need planning permission and Building Regulations approval for some alterations and extensions. Before you start any work on your property, it is advisable to see if you need any type of permission, as extra planning controls apply in Conservation Areas.

It is often the details on a building, particularly its windows, which give it its character. Although you do not need planning permission to replace windows or doors on an unlisted dwelling in a Conservation Area, you should make sure that your alterations are in keeping with the character of the building and the area. Unsympathetic changes may spoil the appearance of the historic scene and devalue your property.

If you are in any doubt over the need for planning permission, please contact the Planning Technician team on 01789 260360, or email [www.planning.technicians@stratford-dc.gov.uk](mailto:www.planning.technicians@stratford-dc.gov.uk).

## I want to demolish my unlisted property (or part of it). Do I need any special permission?

The character of a Conservation Area is often defined by buildings, both listed and unlisted, that together form an important group. For this reason Conservation Area Consent is required in many cases should you want to demolish all or a significant part of any unlisted building within a Conservation Area. This can include the demolition of outbuildings, walls, fences, railings or gates and, in some circumstances, the demolition of part of a building.

No fee is charged for Conservation Area Consent. Application forms are available by telephoning 01789 260303 or can be downloaded from the website [www.stratford.gov.uk](http://www.stratford.gov.uk).

The redevelopment of a cleared site is likely to need planning permission. Proposals for demolition and redevelopment need to be considered together. It is unlikely that you will be allowed to demolish a building before a permission is in place for its replacement.

## How do I ensure that my new development proposals enhance the Conservation Area?

Conservation Area status allows for change as well as preservation. Modern buildings are not necessarily out of place in conservation areas. They must be well designed, use appropriate materials and incorporate hard and soft landscape treatments. It is the District Council's responsibility to pay special attention to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area when considering planning applications for new development. Fully detailed plans should be submitted. New development must respect its historic context in volume, height, scale, form and quality and submitted drawings must demonstrate that it will. Street elevations and perspective drawings showing the context are particularly helpful. Texture, colour and materials should also be carefully considered.

## What about trees: do special controls apply?

Yes, trees in Conservation Areas do have special protection because of the contribution they make to the character and setting of the area. Tree surgery work, from simple pruning to crown reduction, thinning or felling, should not proceed unless you have given the Planning Department six weeks' prior notice in writing. Trees in Conservation Areas which are already protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) are, of course, subject to normal TPO controls. Where the loss of a tree is unavoidable, replanting with species that are native or traditional to the area will be encouraged. Application forms are available for such tree works by telephoning 01789 260303 or can be downloaded from the website [www.stratford.gov.uk](http://www.stratford.gov.uk).

It is a criminal offence to undertake unauthorised works to TPO trees and any trees in Conservation Areas. Ignorance of the legislation is not considered to be a legal defence for unauthorised works.

Please note that you do not have to give prior notification to cut down or do work to shrubs or trees that are less than 75mm in diameter (measured 1.5m above ground).

## I need to advertise my business. What signs can I display?

Conservation Areas sometimes cover commercial areas of particular architectural quality and historic interest at the heart of a town or village. It is accepted that commercial traders need to advertise their businesses, but signs need to fit the design of the shop front or building as a whole and respect its character and appearance. Design, size, position, quality of materials and illumination should contribute to, rather than detract from, the street scene. Internally illuminated box signs and plastic blinds will nearly always be unsuitable. The display of some advertisements in Conservation Areas may require Advertisement Consent.

## My property is listed. How do conservation area controls affect me?

Conservation Area designation does not convey any additional controls above and beyond the strict legal safeguards which always apply to listed buildings. Alterations (both outside and inside), demolition or extensions to a listed building require special permission known as Listed Building Consent (LBC). This may also apply to structures within the curtilage including outbuildings, garden walls, gates or railings. No fee is charged for Listed Building Consent applications.

Please note that if either Listed Building Consent or Conservation Area Consent is required, it is a criminal offence to undertake the works without it.

## I need more information, who can I talk to?

For further advice regarding applications for Planning Permission, Conservation Area Consent, Listed Building Consent and Advertisement Consent, telephone 01789 260303, email [planning.technicians@stratford-dc.gov.uk](mailto:planning.technicians@stratford-dc.gov.uk) or visit the website at [www.stratford.gov.uk](http://www.stratford.gov.uk).

For further information on local character and design guidance the following documents can be obtained by telephoning 01789 260303 or by emailing [planning@stratford-dc.gov.uk](mailto:planning@stratford-dc.gov.uk).

- The Stratford-on-Avon District Design Guide (including the Countryside Design Summary). Design guidance for all those involved in the planning process. Price £18.00 or downloadable, free of charge, from our website.
- The Countryside Design Summary - Summary of the character of Stratford-on-Avon District with general design principles in A1 poster format. Price £8.00 or downloadable, free of charge, from our website.
- Town/Village Design Statements - community-led design statements. Please note that Parish Plans should also be referred to as they often contain valuable design guidance produced by the local community, sometimes even in the form of a Village Design Statement section within the Plan.