

Conservation Strategy for the Historic Environment: Aim, Objectives and Priorities

Introduction

The Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) recognises the importance of Calderdale's heritage to the economy of the District, to the quality of life of its communities, and to its distinct character. The Conservation Strategy for the Historic Environment has been developed to establish clear priorities for the preservation and enhancement of Calderdale's heritage in accordance with those of the Council and the aspirations of English Heritage.

Calderdale hosts a rich variety of archaeological, architectural, artistic and historical features which make up its distinctive historic environment. Conservation, and the preservation and enhancement of the historic environment and its heritage assets, should be an integral part of the local place-making agenda. It is important for improving our understanding of our past, local culture and influences and for increasing tourism and economic vibrancy through improving and encouraging access and appreciation. Heritage assets also support the community's sense of identity and well-being.

The Conservation Strategy supports the Local Development Framework (LDF) which provides the opportunity to refocus and strengthen the local approach to conservation within the national policy framework. In accordance with national policy, the district's historic environment should be preserved and improved for future generations, recognising that it is a non-renewable resource, with wide social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits.

The Core Strategy of the LDF includes the Council's strategic policy objective for the historic environment:

SO6 – To protect and enhance the district's historic environment, and to ensure that new development helps to improve the local character and identity of Calderdale's built environment, and its communities, through high quality, inclusive design.

Furthermore, English Heritage have highlighted the importance of protecting Heritage at Risk and working on understanding the significance of assets which are subject to change or new development, through their Corporate Plan 2011/2015.

The Aim, Objectives and Priorities of the Conservation Strategy, set out below, reflect and support the strategic policy objective of the SCS, LDF and priorities of English Heritage.

The Overall Aim for the Conservation Service is:

"To conserve and enhance the historic environment of Calderdale and the settings of its significant places and buildings."

The Objectives of the Conservation Service are:

- To develop and promote an understanding, recognition and consideration of the significance of the historic environment and the value it adds to Calderdale's sense of identity and well-being.
- To secure a more sustainable future for Heritage at Risk within Calderdale.
- To secure and promote excellence in design affecting the built and historic environment.

Implementation

In order to continue the development of a first class service to the public, given the resource limitations, the **Conservation Strategy Priorities 2011-2014** are as follows:

Heritage at Risk

- **Prioritise** action to address key 'at risk' heritage assets particularly those owned or managed by the Council.
- Make use of **enforcement** powers to protect heritage assets and as a negotiating tool for ameliorative action.
- Establish and maintain a priority list of all designated heritage at risk, and develop a **methodology for action**.
- Work in partnership with **volunteers** where their local knowledge and expertise can help to identify potential heritage at risk and can assist in assessing the significance and value of those heritage assets.

Excellence in Design

- Delivery of **specialist advice** through taking a key role in all aspects of Development Management relating to the historic environment.
- Promote design excellence by creating access to **design guidance**, to be available through various channels, including the Council's website.
- Assist in the production of **development briefs** where they are likely to impact on heritage assets.
- **Facilitate training** to Officers and Councillors to encourage informed recommendations and decision-making when assessing design.
- Develop a closer working relationship with **other technical experts** within the Council and externally, in order to benefit from the available range of skills.
- Consider mechanisms for the delivery of improved design advice across the district.

Understanding, Recognition and Consideration of the Historic Environment

- Promote the **incorporation of the Historic Environment** and its importance within the wider development strategies of the Council.
- Develop a rolling programme of **Conservation Area Management Plans informed by Appraisals**, prioritising those conservation areas likely to be under the greatest threat from development pressure or change, informed by the priorities in the Heritage at Risk section.
- Develop and strengthen involvement and activity with **local interest groups**, where this has implications for the historic environment.
- **Facilitate training** to Officers and Councillors to ensure a greater understanding, recognition and consideration of the historic environment.
- Identify and adopt best practice in conservation management by liaising with other **heritage specialists and organisations**.

The above priorities will be implemented as set out in the **Conservation Strategy for the Historic Environment: Action Plan 2011-2014**. The Action Plan will be reviewed annually to monitor progress and fully reassessed after 3 years.

Future Actions for Review

The following potential work areas have not been included in the current Priorities and Action Plan as due to the limited resources available, they would be unfeasible at the present time.

It is intended that potential future work areas are considered when the Action Plan is reviewed to see if there is scope for additional tasks to be added.

The list is not exhaustive and any potential work areas should be added to the list as and when they are identified.

- The surveying of and identifying a Local List of undesignated heritage assets
- The designation of Article 4 directions in Conservation Areas (unless exceptional circumstances arise)
- The designation of new Conservation Areas
- Establish a Conservation and Heritage Fund for proactive conservation enhancement work across the borough
- Establish a Conservation and Design Awards scheme to promote and recognise excellence and best practice in conservation and design across the borough.