THE CONSERVATION AREA

Since 1967 local planning authorities have designated as conservation areas those areas of … special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance….

The original conservation area for Andover was designated in 1969, being one of the first in Hampshire. The Borough Council considers that, in common with many other early conservation areas, the boundary was drawn too tightly around the most important buildings, centering on the High Street and including parts of London Street, Newbury Street and Bridge Street.

In 1983 the Council decided to look at the boundary again and produced a draft leaflet which showed extensions to the conservation area, including other important parts of the town centre.

The four areas suggested were:

(a) Marlborough Street/Church Close/The Cemetery

The cemetery is of historic interest and provides an important setting for St. Mary’s Church, one of the most dominant buildings on the town’s skyline. Marlborough Street has several buildings of interest including a terrace of Victorian cottages, Pollen’s Almshouses, which were built in 1880 and restored in the nineteenth century, and Anton Laundry, a late eighteenth century building.

Church Close, a group of Georgian houses, includes Andover Museum.

(b) East Street and London Street

In this area are the George Yard and Swan Yard car parks which are large open areas from which there are views of neighbouring historic buildings. Notable buildings in this area include the United Reform Church, numbers 22-48 East Street and the school in East Street.

(c) Bridge Street

The Council considered that the western part of Bridge Street should be included, bringing into the area a number of older buildings such as the small group of shops at its junction with Western Avenue; and

(d) Southern Chantry Way

The small group of properties forming the southern part of Chantry Way are unexceptional in themselves but provide an important backdrop to the Guildhall. Usually they are associated with the High Street and by including them in the conservation area, the Council hopes to ensure that any changes to their appearance are sympathetic to their surroundings.

Designation of the conservation area does not mean that no new development is permitted within its boundary or that its preservation can be considered in isolation from the future needs of people, commerce and industry. It does, however, ensure that claims for the retention of the historic character of the town are fully represented when changes are proposed.

The Borough Council is currently preparing a local plan for Andover and its rural surroundings, which will take account of the conservation area and will include policies to assist the protection and enhancement of the town.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The designation of the conservation area has implications for individual property owners in the area.

(1) Demolition of Buildings

Anyone intending to demolish a building or part of a building within the conservation area, whether listed or not, must first apply for consent from the Borough Council. The only exceptions are certain small or temporary buildings.

(2) Listed Buildings

Anyone intending to carry out work on a listed building, in such a way that might alter its character internally or externally, must apply to the Borough Council for ‘listed building consent’. This could include such works as external redecoration, reroofing and the alteration of doors and windows, as well as structural changes.

(3) Tree Felling

Anyone intending to top, lop, uproot or fell a tree in the conservation area must give the Borough Council six weeks notice of their intention.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The upkeep of historic buildings is an important responsibility for owners and, because of this, a range of grants is available for building repairs. The main sources are summarised below:

(1) ‘Section 10’ Grants

Financial assistance is available from the Secretary of State for the Environment under Section 10 of the Town and Country Planning (Amendment) Act 1972 for works that will make a significant contribution towards preserving or enhancing a conservation area. These ‘Section 10’ grants are available for the restoration and repair of particularly important buildings and, in special cases, projects such as landscaping or the removal of eyesores.

(2) Historic Building Grants

Under the Local Authorities (Historic Buildings) Act 1962 both the Borough Council and the County Council are empowered to contribute towards the cost of essential repairs to historic buildings. The offer of grant-aid is entirely discretionary and the amount of grant will be related to the nature and extent of the repairs to be carried out. Works regarded as coming within the normal maintenance liability of an owner are not eligible.

(3) Environmental Enhancement Grants

The Borough Council and Hampshire County Council have funds for environmental enhancement projects, which may be initiated by parish councils, voluntary groups or individuals. Such work is not limited to conservation areas, but protects within the centre of Andover are certainly encouraged. Suitable works include tree and shrub planting, the removal of eyesores, provision of paving and street furniture and clearance of waterways and footpaths.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information on legal requirements, advice on building work and full details of grants are available from the Planning Department, Test Valley Borough Council, Mayhew Road, Andover (Tel 01264 380600).