

Daventry Reservoir Conservation Area Management Plan



March 2009

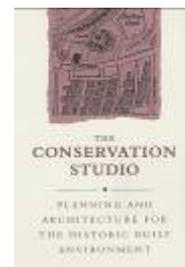


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1. Introduction

Background

- 1.1 The Council has a statutory duty to review its area from time to time in order to determine whether any parts should be designated as conservation areas because of their special architectural or historic interest. In February 2009, Daventry District Council decided that Daventry Reservoir meets those requirements and, accordingly, it was designated.
- 1.2 A separate appraisal of the conservation area was prepared and this was the subject of an extensive public consultation. The appraisal identifies the special interest of the area and the issues it faces.

The purpose of this Management Plan

- 1.3 This management plan follows the appraisal, providing a framework for future actions to address the issues and continue appropriate stewardship of the area.
- 1.4 Government policy¹ has made it clear that conservation areas are not necessarily ‘preservation’ areas. Change is an inevitable facet of modern life and the challenge is to manage change in a manner that does not lose sight of the special historic qualities of a place. The aim of this management plan is, therefore, to ensure that the special architectural or historic interest of the conservation area is both preserved and enhanced for future generations.
- 1.5 The proactive management of conservation areas gives clarity and robustness to decision making, which means that issues may be more defensible in, for instance, planning appeals. The character appraisal and this management plan will, therefore, be of use to the District Council when determining applications for change within or on the edges of the conservation area, and for property owners, developers and their agents when considering new developments. The documents will also be of interest to visitors and to Daventry’s residents, all of whom place a high value on the asset that the reservoir and country park have come to represent.

The character appraisal of the proposed conservation area

- 1.6 A summary of the key characteristics of the Daventry Reservoir area, as defined by the character appraisal, is reproduced below. This is followed by a summary of the principal issues that the area faces. It is these issues that the Management Plan seeks to address.
- 1.7 The special interest of the proposed Conservation Area can be summarised as follows:
- The conservation area is centred on the early 19th century Daventry Reservoir of 70 acres (28ha), which feeds the Grand Union Canal to the north

¹ Planning Policy Guidance 15 (PPG15) – *Planning and the Historic Environment* - 1994

- The focal point of the park is the Visitor Centre and Rangers' Office in the 19th century Reservoir Cottage on the north side of the reservoir
 - The special historic interest in the park is primarily the reservoir itself, due to its links with the Grand Union Canal
 - Some minor surviving historic fabric in the form of brick culverts and walling associated with the reservoir
 - The reservoir has historically provided leisure facilities and other uses for the people of Daventry
- 1.8 In addition the conservation area benefits from the following:
- Surrounding the reservoir is a rich range of habitats including wetlands, woods, recreational areas, pastures and fields
 - The park is a Local Nature Reserve that enjoys Green Flag status and is covered by up-to-date Country Park, Local Nature Reserve and Green Flag Management Plans
 - The reservoir is part of a large area of public open space, roughly 164 acres (66ha), to the north east of Daventry Town Centre
 - Easy access to the park from Daventry means that the park provides an important amenity for the town
 - The neighbouring countryside provides an attractive setting to the park and the adjoining Grand Union Canal
- 1.9 The principal issues identified were:
- Establishing boundaries
 - Maintaining the public realm
 - Building repair and maintenance
 - Management of trees
 - The likely affect of development proposals

2. The implications of conservation area designation

Legislative Background

- 2.1 Designation as a conservation area brings a number of specific statutory provisions aimed at assisting the “preservation and enhancement” of the area. Clearly, some are more relevant to a rural location than others:
- The local authority is under a statutory duty to review designations ‘from time to time’ and to ensure the preservation and enhancement of the conservation area; There is a particular duty to prepare proposals (such as conservation area appraisals, grant schemes or enhancement proposals) to that end
 - In the exercise of any powers under the Planning Acts, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, special attention must be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area
 - The amount of work that can be carried out without planning permission is more restricted in conservation areas. For instance, house extensions to

the side or roof that are unrestricted elsewhere, or placing satellite antennas on a front wall or roof slope

- Extra publicity must be given to planning applications affecting conservation areas. This is usually achieved through the use of advertising in the local newspaper. Developments may be deemed to affect an area even though they are outside the boundary
- Conservation Area Consent is required for the demolition of any unlisted building in a conservation area, subject to minor exceptions, and the local authority or the Secretary of State may take enforcement action or institute a criminal prosecution if consent is not obtained
- Written notice must be given to the Council before works are carried out to any tree in the area, subject to minor exceptions – see 2.2 below
- The display of advertisements may be more restricted than elsewhere
- The Council or the Secretary of State may be able to 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, English Heritage or the Heritage Lottery Fund to provide financial grant schemes to assist with the upkeep of buildings in conservation areas, although funds are usually targeted to areas of economic deprivation

- 2.2 In respect of trees, the normal requirement is to notify the Council six weeks in advance of proposals to lop, top or fell any tree greater than 75 mm diameter at 1.5 metres above the ground. This provides the Council with an opportunity of assessing the tree to see what contribution it makes to the character of the conservation area and whether a Tree Preservation Order should be served. However, where land is managed by the local authority, as is the case at Daventry Country Park, it is clearly not necessary for the Council to serve notice on itself.

National policy and guidance

- 2.3 Central government policy on conservation areas is contained in PPG15.² This covers the designation of areas and the responsibilities that stem from designation, including the appraisal of the special interest of conservation areas and the control of development affecting them. It also makes the general point that *'conservation and sustainable economic growth are complementary objectives and should not generally be seen as in opposition to one another'*.
- 2.4 PPG15 sets the expectations by urging local authorities *'to maintain and strengthen their commitment to stewardship of the historic environment'*. The expectations are further developed in English Heritage guidance on the appraisal and management of conservation areas.³
- 2.5 Further government advice, providing local authorities with the power to reject any development that does not positively contribute to the improvement and

² PPG15 - *Planning Policy Guidance: Planning and the historic environment* – 1994

³ English Heritage – *Guidance on Conservation Area appraisals* – 2005

English Heritage – *Guidance on Management Proposals for Conservation Areas* – 2005

regeneration of its setting, is set out in Planning Policy Statement no. 1 (PPS1). Whilst not specifically concerned with conservation areas, it does provide broad support for improving standards of design and sustainability.

- 2.6 With rising concerns about climate change and energy efficiency, there is an increasing demand for facilities to generate energy at individual buildings, for instance through wind turbines, solar and photovoltaic panels, and heat pumps. The Government wishes to encourage sustainable energy generation and has indicated that devices should be permitted development provided they cause no nuisance to others. This includes any adverse effects on the character of conservation areas.

The Local Plan and the emerging Local Development Framework

- 2.7 The context for the Local Plan and the emerging Local Development Framework is provided by:
- The Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy (2005)
 - The Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands (March 2005 – under review)
 - The Northamptonshire County Structure Plan 1996-2016
- 2.8 The current Daventry District Local Plan was adopted in June 1997 and will be replaced, in due course by the Local Development Framework. Until that time, many of the Local Plan policies have been “Saved” and these help to safeguard the special interest of conservation areas.
- ### **The implications for Daventry Country Park**
- 2.9 Designation of the Daventry Reservoir Conservation Area is unusual in that it does not contain any significant structures, other than the reservoir dam and to some extent the former keeper’s cottage, so the provisions relating to the demolition of buildings are largely irrelevant. The main implications are, therefore, those for trees and new development.
- 2.10 Where the land is under local authority management – the country park, for instance – the conservation area requirements for notifying proposals for tree work are already covered by the existing practice of the Ranger Service. There would only be a new requirement to notify in respect of any trees on private land that may be included within the designation.
- 2.11 Concerns have been raised about the impact that conservation area designation might have specifically on any proposals for new development and, indeed, the potential impact of new development on the character of the conservation area. These developments include, for example suggestions in the Daventry Masterplan Interim Draft (December 2006) for an hotel at the southern end of the site and a canal arm along the east side of the reservoir to link the town centre with the Grand Union Canal. There are also the planning applications submitted for the Monksmoor and Churchfields housing schemes.
- 2.12 Any schemes, such as these, would inevitably affect the character of the conservation area even though they would be on the outside of the boundary. Government policy guidance means that, in such cases, the District Council will

have a statutory duty to take account of the conservation area's character in its determination of any applications.

- 2.13 Should any development take place in the future, the statutory duty continues to apply to any exercise of planning powers, such as further planning applications for, say, extensions to new houses or changes of use.
- 2.14 If any residential building were to take place within the conservation area boundary, it would then be subject to the additional requirements for planning permission (See 2.1 above). It would also be subject to the requirement for conservation area consent if demolition was proposed.
- 2.15 If an hotel was built, the affects would be straightforward: Any material changes requiring planning permission would have to be determined by taking into account the character of the conservation area.
- 2.16 In respect of a new canal arm, the conservation area should make little difference. The canal use should be compatible with a canal reservoir and works of maintenance would not generally require planning permission.

3. Strategic actions

Human resources

- 3.1 The country park is staffed by the Country Park Ranger Service, which ensures the implementation of a management and maintenance regime. The designation of the conservation area involves the additional resources of the team of two conservation officers.
- 3.2 It is important that full use is made of these respective resources not only to maintain the special interest of the area but to enhance it for the information and enjoyment of local people. It is equally important that that the level of skills that the staff resource represents is maintained and developed so that a consistent approach can be sustained.

Action 1: The Council will maintain adequate staffing levels to ensure that the special interest of the conservation area is maintained and enhanced.

Action 2: The Council will ensure that it has access to adequate skills for the maintenance and enhancement of the special interest of the area.

Action 3: The Council will promote consistent decision-making through the training opportunities it provides for elected Members and through continuing professional development for its officers.

Development policy

- 3.3 The approval of the conservation area appraisal with this management plan enables it to be integrated with the emerging Local Development Framework and become a material consideration in decision making on planning matters.

- 3.4 While the Daventry Reservoir Conservation Area is a free-standing designation, its appraisal should also be seen in the context of the Grand Union Canal & Oxford Canal Conservation Area. The last appraisal of this area was carried out in 1995, although the Audit Commission has recommended that best practice is to review areas every five years. A reappraisal is, therefore, overdue. This would not require a fresh start, especially as little development will have taken place along the canals, but it provide the opportunity to update the definition of the special historic or architectural interest and to integrate the special interest of Daventry Reservoir.

Action 4: The Council will ensure that due weight is given to the conservation area appraisal and management plan to support the policies of the Local Plan and emerging Local Development Framework.

Action 5: In due course, the Council will promote the reappraisal of the Grand Union Canal & Oxford Canal Conservation Area taking account of the Daventry Reservoir designation.

Community engagement

- 3.5 It is vital that the historical significance of the reservoir is fully understood, as well as its value for biodiversity and nature conservation, if designation as a conservation area is to realise its potential. This can be achieved locally by on-site interpretation, but there are further opportunities to promote awareness, as appropriate, through the publication of leaflets, through the Council's website and through events organised at the country park.

- 3.6 Community representatives can also be encouraged to contribute local knowledge and opinion to decision making processes through organisations, such as amenity societies or a conservation area advisory committee (CAAC). Government policy recommends the use of CAACs as a valuable interface between local authorities and their communities.

Action 6: The Council will consider means to promote full public awareness of the historical significance of Daventry Reservoir and the relationship to the wider landscape and canal network.

Action 7: The Council will consider setting up a conservation area advisory committee in order to involve local views on this and other conservation areas. It is acknowledged that Daventry Country Park has an existing Local Nature Reserve Management Committee and consideration will also be given as to whether the CAAC would be better combined with this group for this particular location.

Heritage champion

- 3.7 The Council has already nominated a Heritage Champion whose role is to promote awareness of heritage issues at Member level across the range of Council activities. Increasing support for Heritage Champions is provided by English Heritage and full advantage should be taken of this resource.

- 3.8 Further networking to take advantage of shared experience with other historic places in the region and beyond is available through membership of the Historic Towns Forum

Action 8: The Council will encourage and support the role of its Heritage Champion

Action 9: The Council will consider membership of the Historic Towns Forum to enhance links with other historic towns in the East Midlands.

4. Economic actions

Funding

- 4.1 Budgets are already expended on the country park through its existing Management & Maintenance Plan and its Business Plan. The challenges are to ensure that existing levels of expenditure are continued and are used as effectively as possible. All opportunities should be taken to maximise funding from external sources. These may include, for example, public agencies or planning agreements arising from development.

Action 10: The District Council will endeavour to maintain its own financial responsibilities for the upkeep of the country park and its environs at current or enhanced levels.

Action 11: The Council will support efforts to secure external funding to promote active management that adds to the existing qualities of the area.

5. Spatial actions

Boundaries

- 5.1 When the Daventry Reservoir Conservation area was designated, there was extensive debate about the appropriateness of the boundaries and Councillors asked for the issue to be brought back to them for review at an early date.

Action 12: The Council will keep the boundary of the conservation area under regular review in the context of proposals for change in the vicinity.

Setting and urban design

- 5.2 At present, the reservoir and the country park still enjoy a relatively rural setting despite the proximity of the town centre. Clearly, the anticipated growth of Daventry will affect this relationship and it is important that steps are taken to minimise and to mitigate any loss of established qualities that contribute to the special historic interest of the area.

Action 13: The Council acknowledges the potential for the growth of Daventry to have harmful affects on the character of the conservation area and will exercise its

statutory duty to take full account of the conservation area in determining any planning applications.

Action 14: The Council will seek to influence and minimise the affect of the growth of Daventry through the application of firm urban design principles that have regard to distance, spaces and layout as well as the height, bulk, materials and details of buildings.

Public realm enhancement

5.3 It is important that the public realm is well maintained in order to promote public enjoyment and to minimise vandalism. There are opportunities to enhance the special interest of the conservation area through:

- High quality signage
- Well-designed furniture
- Informative interpretation
- Improved connections between the Country Park and the Grand Union Canal along the line of the feeder channel

Action 15: The Council will take any opportunities that may arise to improve public areas, including the facilities at the country park visitor centre, in order to enhance the visiting experience.

Trees and planting

5.4 The care of trees is already a responsibility of the Country Park Ranger Service. There are some trees that date back to the early days of the reservoir and it is now important that the tree maintenance regime should take account of historical significance. It is also important to ensure succession planting to maintain relevant species and to anticipate the eventual demise of trees that are past maturity.

Action 16: The Council will ensure that historical significance is an integral consideration in the management and maintenance of trees in the conservation area.

6. Delivering Action

The strategy

6.1 With the assistance of the local community, the conservation area character appraisal and management plan are both identifying the challenges that the Daventry Reservoir and Country Park are facing. These are summarised at 1.9 above. The issues can be addressed by the actions summarised in Appendix 1.

6.2 Clearly, the actions include some that can start immediately while others may only be aspirations at present pending the development of resources. Resources, however, are not the issue for immediate action. Spending decisions are constantly being made and the challenge is to ensure that those investments are made in ways that benefit the special character of the

conservation area. Priorities are, therefore, a matter of expediency as well as urgency and the Action Plan, at Appendix 2, sets out the tasks in immediate, medium and long-term timescales over a five-year period.

- 6.3 The Management Plan can only be effective, however, if it is actually implemented. It is important, therefore, that responsibility for the actions is accepted and the Action Plan assigns tasks to specific teams or individuals so that they can be included in their work plans with targets and timescales.
- 6.4 Success will require corporate commitment across all Council departments that have an interest in the area, and their partners, to ensure the sensitive exercise of controls, delivery of events and deployment of resources.
- 6.5 Success depends also on the part played by other stakeholders including the Daventry Town Council, local businesses, amenity groups, and the residents of Daventry and surrounding local area. Management of the area already benefits from the Friends of Daventry Country Park and the Local Nature Reserve Management Committee.

Priorities

- 6.6 The Action Plan makes a distinction between immediate and medium-term projects while there are also continuing tasks of a recurring nature.
- 6.7 Immediate projects are generally those that can be adopted without reference to other programmes including resource planning. They will be capable of being completed within the next year.
- 6.8 Medium-term projects are those that require preparation but can be completed within three years.

Action Plan

- 6.9 The Action Plan has been developed in the light of public consultation responses. It takes the form of a spreadsheet, provided at Appendix 2, presenting actions in terms of priority, responsibility and timescales.

Commitment and adoption

- 6.10 It is important that the Council and its partners should commit themselves corporately to the delivery of the Action Plan so that individual tasks are built in to the work programmes of teams and individuals.

Monitoring and review

- 6.11 The efficient delivery of a conservation service requires regular monitoring of change and the agents of change. The Council expects to undertake:
- Periodic reviews of the effectiveness with which the service addresses pressures for change
 - Updating of the baseline survey of the area on a four-yearly basis
 - Review the conservation area character appraisal on a five-yearly basis
 - Annual review and updating of the conservation area management plan

Appendix 1. Summary of actions (Identified in Sections 3-5 above)

- Action 1: The Council will maintain adequate staffing levels to ensure that the special interest of the conservation area is maintained and enhanced.*
- Action 2: The Council will ensure that it has access to adequate skills for the maintenance and enhancement of the special interest of the area.*
- Action 3: The Council will promote consistent decision-making through the training opportunities it provides for elected Members and through continuing professional development for its officers.*
- Action 4: The Council will ensure that due weight is given to the conservation area appraisal and management plan to support the policies of the Local Plan and emerging Local Development Framework.*
- Action 5: In due course, the Council will promote the reappraisal of the Grand Union Canal & Oxford Canal Conservation Area taking account of the Daventry Reservoir designation.*
- Action 6: The Council will consider means to promote full public awareness of the historical significance of Daventry Reservoir and the relationship to the wider landscape and canal network.*
- Action 7: The Council will consider setting up a conservation area advisory committee in order to involve local views on this and other conservation areas. It is acknowledged that Daventry Country Park has an existing Local Nature Reserve Management Committee and consideration will also be given as to whether the CAAC would be better combined with this group for this particular location.*
- Action 8: The Council will encourage and support the role of its Heritage Champion*
- Action 9: The Council will consider membership of the Historic Towns Forum to enhance links with other historic towns in the East Midlands.*
- Action 10: The District Council will endeavour to maintain its own financial responsibilities for the upkeep of the country park and its environs at current or enhanced levels.*
- Action 11: The Council will support efforts to secure external funding to promote active management that adds to the existing qualities of the area.*
- Action 12: The Council will keep the boundary of the conservation area under regular review in the context of proposals for change in the vicinity.*

Action 13: The Council acknowledges the potential for new development to have harmful affects on the character of the conservation area and will exercise its statutory duty to take full account of the conservation area in determining any planning applications.

Action 14: The Council will seek to influence and minimise the affect of the growth of Daventry through the application of firm urban design principles that have regard to distance, spaces and layout as well as the height, bulk, materials and details of buildings.

Action 15: The Council will take any opportunities that may arise to improve public areas, including the facilities at the country park information centre, in order to enhance the visiting experience.

Action 16: The Council will ensure that historical significance is an integral consideration in the management and maintenance of trees in the conservation area.

Appendix 2. The Action Plan

DAVENTRY RESERVOIR CONSERVATION AREA Action Plan

CONTINUING ACTIONS

*Action:	Achieved by:	Responsible Team/Service:
1. Maintain adequate staffing levels	Staff development and recruitment	Countryside Services
2. Ensure access to adequate skills	Monitoring training needs and outsourcing as necessary	Planning and Countryside Services
16. Ensure historical significance is integral with tree management	Adjustments to policy and practice	Countryside Services

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

*Action:	Achieved by:	Responsible Team/Service:
3. Promote consistent decision making	Provision of training opportunities	Planning and Community
4. Use the appraisal and management plan to support planning policies	Give due weight in developing the Local Development Framework	Planning - Policy
6. Promote public awareness of historical significance	Publish the appraisal and seek other opportunities to publicise it	Community
8. Support the role of Heritage Champion	Participate in the English Heritage HELM programme	Community and Democracy
10. Maintain levels of funding	Ensure the importance of the contry park is acknowledged in budget planning	Community and Democracy
12.Keep the conservation area boundary under review	Bring forward boundary debate	Community
13. Take account of the conservation area character in considering development proposals	Development control practice, ensuring access to conservation expertise	Planning - Development Control
14. Minimise the affect of development through urban design principles	Publish guidance on urban design principles and their application	Planning - Development Control and Community

MEDIUM TERM

*Action:	Achieved by:	Responsible Team/Service:
5. Promote re-appraisal of Grand Union Canal conservation area	Partnership with other local authorities	Community
7. Consider setting up a Conservation Area Advisory Committee	Partnership with local amenity groups and other stakeholders	Community and Countryside Services
9. Consider membership of the Historic Towns Forum	Take policy decision and consult the HTF	Community
11. Make efforts to secure external funding	Support funding bids	Community and Countryside Services
15. Seek opportunities to improve public realm	Bid for funding from existing budgets and external sources	Community, Countryside Services and County Highways

*Numbering relates to the schedule of actions at Appendix 1.