

7. DEVELOPMENT IN CONSERVATION AREAS OR AFFECTING LISTED BUILDINGS

- 7.1 All development should be of high quality. However, where conservation areas and/or listed buildings are affected, there is a need for special care and attention to detail with regard to design, colour and materials. The services of an architect or qualified professional agent should therefore be employed, if at all possible, to design proposals.
- 7.2 A conservation area is an area of "special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance". The local planning authority has a duty to identify and designate conservation areas under Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Dacorum has 23 conservation areas.
- 7.3 A listed building is a building included in the statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest compiled on a national basis by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. The lists for Dacorum are available for inspection at the Civic Centre, Hemel Hempstead. There are over 800 listings affecting more than 1,000 properties in the Borough.
- 7.4 Subject to minor exceptions, the Council's consent is required for the demolition of any building in a conservation area. In the case of a listed building and all structures and surfaces within its curtilage, consent is also required for any external or internal works which will in any way affect its character. Consent for demolition of listed buildings, subject to minor exceptions, is determined by the Secretary of State (Deputy Prime Minister).
- 7.5 The presumption will be in favour of the repair and improvement of buildings of architectural or historic interest; demolition and replacement will normally only be permitted where it can be shown that the building is incapable of reasonable use or repair. Retention of the facade may be acceptable when the building behind is substandard.

Design of New Building in Conservation Areas

- 7.6 All new development within conservation areas (buildings, extensions and alterations to existing buildings, and other important contributors to the overall scene such as walls, fencing, parking, street furniture and landscaping) should positively enhance the characteristics of the street scene and blend with the local building tradition (see Policy 120).
- 7.7 An examination of the site from different view points will give an idea of the sort of development that will fit in, and the appropriate size and bulk of the building.

- 7.8 In older town centres, building plots are relatively narrow, and redevelopment must avoid the massive repetitive and unrelieved facades which typify so many modern buildings. Building bulk should be broken up into units reflecting the prevailing street pattern.
- 7.9 The existing building line should be paramount, but projection or recession by a few inches (no more) may be a useful design feature to add interest, especially to the upper floors.
- 7.10 Modern materials have released designers from constraints of traditional materials and construction methods, from which traditional proportions are derived. However the traditional styles should be emulated as far as possible, and traditional materials, such as timber, employed sensitively.
- 7.11 Pitched roofs reflecting the degree of pitch in the locality should normally be provided. Occasionally flat roofs will be appropriate however, for example on extensions to some attractive flat-roofed buildings. The treatment of eaves and verges is as important as the building's outline and adherence to the existing roof line.
- 7.12 Similar materials should be used to those traditionally used in the locality. Reuse of old materials from demolished buildings are especially important in carrying out alterations and extensions.
- 7.13 Although not normally subject to planning control, colour affects the street scene and should be used with restraint to harmonise with the surrounding area.
- 7.14 The success of new building will also depend on the correct proportioning of windows and doors. Window design should be appropriate to the age of the building, and modern standard replacements avoided.
- 7.15 Shop fronts are covered in general terms in a separate supplementary guideline. Modern shop windows with large areas of unrelieved glass can be difficult to integrate successfully with an historic street. Where shops comprise more than one building, it is essential that each façade retains its own identity from the ground upwards; ground floors should relate to the upper floors in terms of structural concept, proportion, design, scale, vertical alignment, materials and colour. Shop front design, including fascias, lettering, stall risers, doors, canopies, etc, should be treated as an integral part of the building design.

Listed Buildings

- 7.16 Proposals to alter, paint or extend a listed building, or to erect a new building in close proximity to a listed building, must not adversely affect the character, appearance or setting of the listed building (see Policy

119). In preparing a scheme, the same considerations will apply as for buildings or proposals in conservation areas.

- 7.17 To arrive at an informed judgement of the likely impact of any particular development on a listed building, the Council may require the developer to submit further details in the form of a historic building assessment before the application is determined.
- 7.18 Listed buildings, as well as adding to the quality of the environment and the character of the towns, villages and countryside in Dacorum, also in themselves contain much information about the architectural and historical developments that made these places what they are today. Listed building consent therefore may be subject to conditions and/or agreements which would facilitate programmes of historic building recording prior to the commencement of works and/or the observation by historic building experts of the site works as they progress.