

TWENTIETH  
CENTURY  
SOCIETY



Conservation Areas Project

Potential Conservation Areas  
Scoping Report

December 2017



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## 1.0 SUMMARY

This report summarises the outcomes of research undertaken as part of a wider project exploring conservation area designation for twentieth century structures and landscapes.

The report was commissioned in 2017, the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 1967 Civic Amenities Act which established the principle of Conservation Area designation. The rationale for the whole project is the recognition by both The Twentieth Century Society and Historic England that twentieth century heritage is often under-valued and vulnerable. There is clearly a need for improved protection in those cases where statutory listing cannot be justified but the heritage is of sufficient merit to justify some protection. There is also recognition of the benefits to be had from raising awareness of the contribution that twentieth century heritage makes to the wider historic built environment and of the benefits of preserving that heritage through conservation area designation.

The principal issues explored in the wider project are the extent of existing conservation area designation for areas made up of largely twentieth century buildings and/or landscape and the possibility of identifying areas which may be considered suitable for future designation/conservation area status. Another issue explored in the wider project is whether there are areas of twentieth century development of merit which should be more explicitly valued for contributing to the architectural or historic interest of existing conservation areas designated primarily for buildings of other periods.

The trawl for potential twentieth century conservation areas showed that there are many suitable candidates. In particular, many post-war public housing schemes are of considerable historic and architectural interest and are certainly worthy of consideration as new conservation areas. Some parts of some New Towns should also be considered and Twentieth Century university campuses are another type of development whose character may be best protected by conservation area designation, rather than statutory listing.

Sadly, much valuable and interesting post-war development is being demolished or heavily altered, or is coming under threat of major change, with little or no regard to the heritage significance of such developments because they are not viewed as 'historic'. Indeed, twentieth century structures and especially the tall buildings which became popular in the 1960s are regularly identified as 'negative features' in heritage assessments.

It seems clear that when the merits of twentieth century buildings and developments are being assessed for possible conservation area designation there needs to be both thorough historical research and a more open approach to the particular qualities of twentieth century design, which are often very different from those of earlier periods.

## 2.0 TERMS OF REFERENCE AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Project Design Brief was prepared by The Twentieth Century Society and approved by Historic England.

The Twentieth Century Society appointed The Architectural History Practice and Robinson Wild Consulting as research consultants to the project in June 2017. Funding for the project was provided by Historic England (Project number 7597 – C20 Conservation Areas).

The Steering Group for the project was composed of Catherine Croft (C20 Director), Susannah Charlton (C20 Project Manager), Clare Price (C20 Caseworker), Lucy Haile (L.B.Harrow), David Heath (C20 Casework Convenor), David McDonald (IHBC) and Alan Powers (C20 Trustee). The Historic England representative was originally Tim Brennan, who was replaced at an early stage of the project by Dr Victoria Thomson (HE Head of Planning Advice and Reform). Steering Group meetings were also attended by the consultants.

The research discussed in this report was undertaken by Neil Burton and Andrew Derrick of The Architectural History Practice Ltd., and Esther Robinson Wild of Robinson Wild Consulting. The Report was prepared jointly by Neil Burton and Esther Robinson Wild.

The principal outcomes of the project as whole are set out in Section 5 of the Project Design Brief (The Brief) and are as follows:

1. A report on existing C20 Conservation Areas (section 5.1.1)
2. An exemplary recommendation to the local authority for designating an area of C20 development (section 5.1.2)
3. Guidance by the C20 Society on the protection of C20 heritage within conservation areas of predominantly older buildings (section 5.1.3)
4. A report identifying areas which the C20 Society believes to be suitable for future conservation area status (section 5.1.4)
5. A seminar for those involved in designating or managing conservation areas (section 5.1.5)

This report outlines the body of work undertaken on potential conservation areas as described in Section 5.1.4 of the Brief. The report will help meet one of the aims of the project to '*provide a scoping paper identifying potential areas likely to be suitable for future conservation area status*' (sections 1.2). The body of work undertaken on potential conservation areas contributes to the meeting of another project objective, '*To increase the protection of C20 built heritage through identifying, and facilitating the designation of, appropriate conservation areas.*' (section 3.1).

The Brief outlined an approach to data gathering and a desk-based research strategy (Brief section 10 & appendix 5). It was proposed that the research on potential conservation areas would initially be undertaken on a mainly reactive basis to information supplied by Twentieth Century Society caseworkers, members, supporters, project stakeholders and heritage sector partners. A dedicated email address, [C20ConservationAreas@gmail.com](mailto:C20ConservationAreas@gmail.com) was set up to which the information could be sent. It would then be the task of the research consultants to carry out assessments of the status and condition of the specified areas as part of identifying potential areas suitable for future conservation area designation. In tandem with this, the research consultants would also assess areas that they were aware of from their previous work and/or existing knowledge.

Section 10.3.2 of the Brief requires the research consultants *'to prepare summaries of around 50 areas that have potential for future conservation area status, providing information on their location, the architect, date of construction, borough, one or two images and a short paragraph about the site'*. The summaries (listed in appendix 1) follow a standard format which was agreed by the Steering Group (see appendix 2). The summaries are intended principally as identifiers not as full descriptions. In line with the research strategy, they are the result of a desk-based assessment. The historic information is derived mainly from secondary sources and the pictures are taken largely from the Web (and no copyright clearance for future publication has been obtained). No specific boundaries are suggested for the potential conservation areas because these clearly need to be based on more thorough research and site inspection.

The research consultants' remit also required the preparation of an exemplary research project leading to a draft recommendation (in the form of a conservation area appraisal) to designate an area of twentieth century development (Brief section 5.1.2 and section 10.2). The requirements of the original project design brief relating to the exemplary project were modified as the project progressed, following discussions with the Steering Group. The initial requirement was for one project, but this was extended to two. It was also originally considered that the project would focus on an area of twentieth century housing, but the focus was widened to consider other building types.

Draft criteria against which areas considered of merit would be assessed, based on Historic England advice, were produced by the research consultants (Appendix 3). These criteria were approved by the Steering Group.

The two selected projects are referenced in section 3.1 below. The exemplary projects represent one of the targeted products of the main project as described in Brief section 5.1.2. They also contribute to the meeting of two project aims, to *'produce guidance for designating a C20 conservation area, based on an exemplary project'* and *'raise awareness among those involved in designating or managing conservation areas'* (Brief section 1.2).

The project has been well publicised and promoted through social (Twitter) and digital media as well as at conferences. It was featured in Civic Voice's weekly update on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2017. Civic Voice is the national charity for the civic movement in England and are currently running their own conservation areas focused campaign, 'Big Conservation Conversation'. Civic Societies are amongst the target audience for the products of this project (Brief section 5). It was also in Issue 350 – 29<sup>th</sup> June of the Heritage Alliance's weekly Heritage Update, the Landscape Institute's e-Newsletter on 6 July 2017, SAVE Britain's Heritage Newsletter on 10 August 2017 and the RTPI's Urban Design Network Newsletter in August 2017.

Project team members attended several conferences at which the project was promoted, including *Architecture, Citizenship, Space: British Architecture from the 1920s to the 1970s* at Oxford Brookes 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> June; the IHBC Annual School in Manchester 22<sup>nd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> June, Historic England's HELM Training Event *Conservation Areas @50* in York on the 28<sup>th</sup> September, and the IHBC London Branch Day Conference in London on 3<sup>rd</sup> October. The latter specifically focused on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of conservation areas and the Twentieth Century Society Director, Catherine Croft and Elaine Harwood of Historic England, jointly presented a paper on the project.

Additionally, members of the Steering Group put out a request for information to their respective organisations and sector colleagues including Conservation Officers who are an important part of the target audience for the products of this project (Brief section 5).

## **3.0 RESEARCH OUTCOMES**

### **3.1 EXEMPLARY PROJECTS**

One of the target products of the project as described in Section 5.1.2 of the Brief is a recommendation to a local planning authority for the designation of an exemplary area of twentieth century buildings and/or landscape, in the form of a draft conservation area appraisal.

Research undertaken on those existing conservation areas which have a predominantly twentieth century character or appearance demonstrated an overriding bias towards housing as a building type, with that of the early twentieth century particularly well represented. This bias was taken into consideration when drafting criteria for the exemplary project (Appendix 3), and it was agreed that it would be desirable to consider, where available information allowed, a wider range of building types, periods and geographical areas. After some discussion in the Steering Group, it was suggested that there should be two appraisals, to give some diversity.

A shortlist of potential exemplary areas was assessed against the specified criteria. The likelihood of a supportive owner and/or local planning authority was taken into account. The assessment also paid regard to paragraph 127 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2012) which directs local planning authorities to ensure that an area justifies designation so that the concept of conservation is not devalued.

Two areas were selected by the Steering Group: Plymouth Core City Centre and The Eaglestone (Housing) Estate in Milton Keynes. Draft Conservation Area Character Appraisals have been produced for both areas and have been subject to review by the Steering Group. The Plymouth appraisal is already the subject of discussion with the local planning authority and an initial stakeholder meeting to be held in Plymouth is planned for the 9<sup>th</sup> January 2018.

### **3.2 SUGGESTED POTENTIAL CONSERVATION AREAS**

An initial list of c.150 potential conservation areas was compiled from a variety of sources. A quantity of information was supplied or facilitated by stakeholders including The Twentieth Century Society members, supporters and caseworkers. Further suggestions were made by some of the casework officers in the Historic England local offices. Joanna Smith of the London and South-East Research Team at Historic England very kindly supplied a detailed and documented list of housing developments of historic interest arising from her ongoing work on twentieth century suburbs.

These suggestions were supplemented by a systematic review of the *Buildings of England* series, and by reference to other published works including Elain Harwood's *Space, Hope and Brutalism: English Architecture, 1945-1975* published in 2015, and *London Suburbs*, published in 1999 by Merrell Holberton in association with the then English Heritage, which has a particularly helpful gazetteer.

Responses to project publicity as received in the dedicated email inbox were slightly lower than hoped and anticipated. In the period 20<sup>th</sup> June – 15<sup>th</sup> November, c.29 emails were direct responses to the request for information with the majority, c.22, received from mainly London-based Conservation Officers informing us of existing conservation areas. Conservation Officers from Nottingham, South Gloucestershire, Cheltenham, East Anglia and East Midlands also responded. Notwithstanding the overall low response, this can be seen as a good result as they are amongst the target audience for the project. Within the c.29 emails, there were c.59 suggestions for potential conservation areas and four for proposed extensions to existing conservation areas. Housing was the dominant building type with post-war town centres and university campuses also suggested. In terms of geographic spread, there was a bias towards the south of England.

The initial list was further refined in discussion with the project team and in consultation with the Twentieth Century Society regional groups to select the most eligible examples and to produce a reasonable regional spread. Greater emphasis was placed on post-war examples because the review of existing twentieth century conservation areas carried out as part of this project showed that the post-war period is under-represented in designations, with only 21% of the existing C20 Conservation Areas that were identified dating from after 1939. Again, the assessment paid close regard to the requirements in paragraph 127 of the National Planning Policy Framework and to published Historic England guidance on conservation area designation.

There are 50 entries in the proposed new conservation areas category. As the original brief recognised, the project coverage could not be comprehensive given the project's timescale and resources. The list is not at all definitive and there are doubtless many other possible twentieth century candidates for conservation area designation.

## **4.0 THEMES & ISSUES**

Several key themes have emerged through the research, analysis and related discussions which are reflected in the list of suggested potential conservation areas. Some of these themes relate to specific building types but others concern more general issues like scale, land ownership and perceptions of quality.

Among candidates for conservation area designation of earlier twentieth century developments, those influenced by garden city ideals predominate, with some modernist private housing developments and some council housing estates. After 1945 the pattern of built development was inevitably influenced by the Second World War, both directly and indirectly.

### **4.1 Bombed Towns & Cities**

Bombing destroyed a large amount of the urban building stock and large parts of several towns and cities, including central Plymouth, Exeter, Coventry, Liverpool and London. The rebuilding of town centres was often taken as an opportunity for re-planning and the new buildings were usually in a contemporary style, rather than a pastiche of what had existed before the war. Many of these town centres are now covered by conservation area designations which were adopted principally to protect groups of older buildings but in Plymouth, where the city centre was completely rebuilt after the war, there is currently no central conservation area. One of the principal recommendations from this study is that the Plymouth city centre should be designated as a conservation area and a draft conservation area appraisal has been prepared to inform future discussion.

### **4.2 New Towns**

The list of potential conservation areas includes several of the New Towns, or rather parts of New Towns. In 1946 the New Towns Act established several brand new communities, mainly intended to accommodate the overspill of population from London, where large numbers of people had been displaced by bombing. The first new town to be designated was Stevenage in 1946, followed by Hemel Hempstead, Harlow, Crawley and Newton Aycliffe in County Durham all established in 1947, Peterlee in 1948 and Coventry in 1950. A second group of new towns was established in the early 1960s including Skelmersdale (1961) Telford (1963) and Runcorn (1964). A third group established in the late 1960s include Milton Keynes (1967) Peterborough (1968) and Washington (1968). To these might be added places like Thamesmead, in the south east of London, begun in the late 1960s. Although not a New Town in the strict sense of the word, Thamesmead was originally intended to house between 60,000 and 100,000 inhabitants and was considerably larger than a housing estate. All of these new developments were to some extent 'designed', with an initial masterplan and clear intentions about the types of buildings. In most cases the original design was never fully realised and was modified to suit the changing political, financial and social climate.

### 4.3 Public Housing Developments

By far the largest category in the list of proposed conservation areas is public housing. In the years between the two world wars many local councils undertook the building of new houses for rent. In rural areas these were usually provided in small groups on the edges of small towns and villages. In larger urban areas such as Birmingham, Nottingham and Lincoln the developments could be on a larger scale and often consisted of streets of two-storey houses in a semi-formal layout. The 1947 Town and Country Planning Act, which came into force in July 1948, established the principle of planning permission for all new development. The existing 1400 local councils were amalgamated into 145 planning authorities and given considerable new powers to control new development.

Many of these new councils were active in the replacement of bomb-damaged or what were considered 'sub-standard' areas of housing with new housing, almost always in planned developments - housing estates - which could be of considerable size. Often land with existing housing was compulsorily purchased to allow comprehensive redevelopment.

Public housing was considered an important area of design in the decades after the war. Most councils had in-house architectural staff whose numbers steadily increased. Many of the new housing developments were designed by, or at least influenced by, leading architects of national standing and incorporated new ideas on architectural form and technology. These new ideas included a widespread interest in the possibilities of prefabrication, a move towards informal layouts with a mixture of building forms and a progression from the generally low-rise housing of the inter war period to much taller buildings, at least until 1968 when the partial collapse of Ronan Point in the London Borough of Newham brought a general moratorium on the building of point blocks.

The landscaping of the new housing estates was also given much more consideration than in pre-war estates, with greater emphasis on informal grouping, mixed development and the provision of open spaces. Many local planning authorities began to employ in-house landscape designers. Sadly, landscaping proposals were often the first casualty of cost economies and in later years the management and upkeep of the landscaping in housing developments has often been neglected.

The sheer volume of public housing built since the last war makes it inevitable that there should be a good number of developments of sufficiently high quality and architectural interest to be considered for conservation area designation. But there is clearly a widespread feeling shared by many residents, local councillors and council officers, that public housing is, almost by definition, unsuitable for designation. Part of this feeling probably comes from an assumption that council houses can't be 'heritage' and part from an aversion to the idea of the restrictions which is it assumed that designation will bring. At the present time, in many cases, this feeling is reinforced for local planning authorities by the prospect of major regeneration work involving both alteration and new building within established estate boundaries.

#### **4.4 Private Housing Developments**

The list of potential conservation areas also includes several private housing developments, of which the best-known is probably New Ash Green in Kent which was developed after 1967 by Span, with Eric Lyons as the designer. As with the public housing, these developments are usually characterised by a single overall design and in most cases the landscaping is of better quality and better-preserved. There are also some self-consciously 'exemplary' developments like Energy World in Milton Keynes and BedZed in the London Borough of Sutton which were built to trial new technologies.

#### **4.5 University Campuses**

There has been a steady expansion of university education during the twentieth century, through the 'red brick' civic universities in the early part of the century and the 'new universities' of the 1960s, culminating in the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act which granted university status to 33 former polytechnics. Universities have, historically, been significant patrons of architecture and in several mid-twentieth-century instances complete new campuses were built to provide accommodation for both students and the teaching faculties. One of the best-known examples in the University of Sussex, where the original campus buildings designed by Basil Spence and built in the early 1960s are now listed (at Grades I and II\*). Elsewhere, university campuses are often made up of individual buildings of various dates, which may or may not be of listable quality in themselves but group together to form an area of architectural interest. Post-war university layouts also usually include an element of landscaping.

#### **4.6 Single Design**

The most familiar type of conservation area is a village settlement or something of similar scale with an accretive pattern of development combining buildings of different types and periods. By contrast, the majority of potential new post-war conservation areas are the product of a single design, or part of a coherent design approach, which may be attributable to a named designer. Familiar examples are the various projects in Harlow and the London Borough of Enfield where (Sir) Frederick Gibberd was a major influence, the housing estates in the London Borough of Lambeth built under the aegis of Edward Hollamby and those parts of Peterlee New town in County Durham laid out under the supervision of the artist Victor Passmore. In these cases, the original design intention is a significant element in the history of the conservation area. Sometimes it may be that the layout of a particular area has historical or design significance equal to or greater than the built structures. One extreme example is the road grid of Milton Keynes New Town which is quintessential to the character of the city and was a milestone in British urban planning. It was hugely influential in subsequent urban layouts elsewhere and the planting has now matured to produce an attractive environment. The Milton Keynes road grid is clearly of very considerable historic significance but it has not been included in the present list of recommendations for reasons of scale.

## **4.7 Single Ownership**

Land-ownership in most existing conservation areas is fragmented, but in many potential twentieth century conservation areas all or most of the land is in single ownership. This is true of most public and some private housing developments, large parts of new towns and also of university campuses. The picture is complicated in the case of what was originally public housing by the increasing amount of private ownership of individual houses and flats acquired through the Right to Buy, although in such cases the common parts of buildings and also their surroundings, including any landscaping, usually remain in council ownership. The designation of a conservation area where all the land is in single ownership can present problems if the landowner, whether private or a public body, sees the designation as a threat to freedom of action. Nevertheless, the local planning authority does have the power to designate in such cases and the best way forward is to demonstrate that conservation area controls can substantially improve landscape and environmental qualities to the benefit of both occupiers and owners.

## **4.8 Tall Buildings**

Tall buildings do not have a comfortable place in heritage perceptions and many existing conservation area appraisals identify tall buildings as negative features, without any consideration of their architectural merit. But many worthwhile public and private housing developments of the late 1950s and 1960s incorporated tall buildings, often as part of a mixed development scheme. The Ronan Point disaster in 1968 put a virtual end to the building of tall blocks of flats by local councils but tall buildings continued to be popular for commercial schemes. Much more recently, the Grenfell Tower disaster has again shown tall residential buildings in a bad light. One conservation officer consulted in the preparation of this report declared that it would be impossible for his council to accept any proposed conservation area designation which included tall blocks of flats

## **4.9 Negative Perceptions about Designation of Twentieth Century Conservation Areas**

*"They're incoherent, they're strange, they're dramatic, they're modern, they're messy, they're not 'historic.....'*

The above quote is taken from Owen Hatherley's 2012 book, *A New Kind of Bleak: Journeys Through Urban Britain* (p.178). Although the statement is made with reference to the post-war development which came to characterise the centres of many World War II bombed English cities and towns, it is considered by some to be applicable to nearly all extant twentieth century buildings and landscapes, and particularly to post-war development. In some ways, the statement helps to contextualise and explain some of the outcomes of the research for this report; specifically, that part which states that buildings of this period are not historic.

Notwithstanding the relative proliferation of major post-war housing projects and other areas of twentieth century development, we have found a paucity of extant and unaltered good surviving examples. For example, many New Towns and civic centres, particularly in the north of England, are being heavily altered in whole or part, and their heritage significance is being erased or significantly compromised. This has the obvious effect of reducing the number of potential candidates for conservation area designation.

The speed at which post-war development is either being demolished or is coming under threat of major change, and the acquiescence of local planning authorities and communities in this work, suggests that little or no regard is given to such developments in heritage terms and they are not viewed as 'historic'. The Twentieth Century Society has recognised this issue and has sought to give more publicity to it through their recent *Lost Modern* campaign. In the context of that campaign, the Director of the Twentieth Century Society, Catherine Croft succinctly stated the key issue as that of buildings being lost because the speed of demolition is increasingly outpacing heritage recognition. While listing allows for the possibility that buildings under 30 years old may be considered to be of architectural or historic interest, this possibility is seldom allowed for in conservation area designation.

There is also a language issue around the subject of post-war development. Negative perceptions are promoted through the descriptive language used by writers and journalists and there needs to be a movement away from terms such as 'challenging', 'ugly' and 'bleak'. In much written comment on post-war architecture there is an overriding focus on aesthetics and the perceived absence of 'beauty' which many people feel to be an essential characteristic of historic buildings and places. This in turn leads to little or no consideration of the significance of post-war development in heritage terms.

In recent years, Historic England and heritage partners including The Twentieth Century Society, as well as many individuals, have helped towards a change in attitudes and perceptions of post-war development. The Twentieth Century Society has greatly increased the amount of information available through its series of monographs on twentieth century architects, through its Journal and through online comment and a social media presence. Historic England have improved protection of buildings and public art of this period through their listing programme. Books such as Elain Harwood and James O. Davies's, *England's Post-War Listed Buildings for Historic England* (2015), Elain Harwood's *Space, Hope and Brutalism: English Architecture, 1945-1975* (2015), Owen Hopkins's *Lost Futures. The Disappearing Architecture of Post-War Britain* (2017), and Richard Brook's *Manchester Modern* (2017), amongst others, evidence a reassessment and revival of informed interest in the buildings and landscapes of the post-war period.

In the assessment of candidates for the exemplary projects consideration was given to the willingness of a community to support the designation of a new conservation area and primarily for the special character of twentieth century development. As part of this exercise, general research was undertaken on conservation area designation and perceptions around it. This was considered especially important given the relatively high level of negativity against post-war development, as discussed above, which could be considered a low base from which to promote conservation area designation.

There appeared to be two very common perceptions: firstly that designation can stifle innovation and sometimes discourage new contribution to places and secondly that it creates added bureaucracy. Such perceptions of designation are not, of course, confined to post war development but become more intractable when significance is a contested area – as is sometimes the case with post-war buildings and areas.

Taking these in turn, change is not necessarily harmful and is often beneficial. The National Planning Policy Framework (2012) positively encourages new development within conservation areas which enhances their significance. As Historic England suggest in *Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management* (2016), intelligent and inspired design which is responsive to local distinctiveness and respects history and context can bring about economic and social benefits. The suggestion is borne out by the statistics (Historic England *Heritage and the Economy 2017*) which indicate that investing in historic places generates economic returns for a regenerated area with on average £1 of public sector expenditure on heritage-led regeneration generating £1.60 in additional economic activity over a ten year period

Successful conservation areas can reinforce and support local identity, character and scale, and conservation areas can contribute to sustainable development under the NPPF (para 7). This is amply borne out by Historic England's 2017 Heritage Counts research. Some local authorities explicitly acknowledge that designation is a measure available to local authorities to assist in raising the quality of the environment and a proven tool when used in an appropriate context. Designation should not create added bureaucracy and especially not if early consultation with the planning authority and other stakeholders is undertaken which also reduces risk and removes uncertainty.

## 5.0 CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions from a desk-based, broad-brush, first-stage survey of this kind must inevitably be tentative but one thing emerges very clearly. The trawl for potential twentieth century conservation areas shows that there are many post-war public housing schemes which are certainly worthy of consideration as new conservation areas. Some parts of some New Towns should also be considered. The lack of designation in these areas probably reflects a traditional bias against recognising the heritage value of public housing. Other factors may be the presence of tall buildings in many of the schemes and the reluctance of local Councils, as owners of these estates, to take on what they see as additional responsibilities.

Some Conservation Officers consulted for this study have made us aware of proposals to designate areas of twentieth century development which have been put on hold because of 'resource issues'. It also happens that while Conservation Officers may be very supportive about designation, Planning Officers may not necessarily agree. In such cases it may be helpful for The Twentieth Century Society to facilitate an informed discussion of proposals so that the historical and architectural values may be given their due weight.

The research has indicated that there is likely to be value in focusing on proposals to extend existing conservation areas to encompass twentieth century development. One specific example is Oakland Park, Dawlish, where part of a 1970s Mervyn Seal private housing development already lies within the Dawlish conservation area but part remains outside. Another example, perhaps more noteworthy and useful in terms of publicising the outcomes of the project, is the Newland conservation area in Hull which encompasses some of the Hull University campus buildings. It appears that a good case could be made to extend the boundary to include other notable campus buildings which are good examples of high quality buildings of twentieth century date. Elaine Harwood notes it as being a distinctive campus that balances Arts and Crafts, neo-Georgian and modern architecture, *'town planning here seen in miniature'*.

Following on from the Hull example, there may also be value in considering whether a listed twentieth century building can be made to form the focus of a conservation area. Although listing and conservation area designation are usually seen as separate tools there may be instances when they can work together for the benefit of the built heritage, with a listing serving as a marker of quality on which a case for conservation area designation can be built, if the wider area meets the required national standards.

Influencing designation decisions and improving understanding of twentieth century heritage are both targeted outcomes of the project, which will be facilitated through a workshop planned for late March 2018, to be aimed principally at local authority staff from the conservation, planning and housing sections. Conservation Staff may have limited scope to make new designations but can have a direct influence on Conservation Area Appraisal documents. One Conservation Officer consulted for this study highlighted the fact that twentieth century development is very often considered a negative contributor to the special interest of an area and is noted as such in character appraisals. Better guidance on making informed decisions on the

heritage value of twentieth century buildings could improve appreciation of their qualities.

In the end, it is public appreciation which will lead to better protection. Improving understanding of the architectural and historical significance of our surroundings and the special interest of the areas in which we live and work will strengthen the argument for protection of those qualities. It is also necessary to communicate that lack of time-depth for buildings and landscapes does not necessarily mean that they are not historic and of no significance in heritage terms. Post-war development represents a link with the past. Local distinctiveness, whether in the form of Georgian terraces or 1960s public housing, can act as a catalyst for regeneration and combine with well-designed new development to bring economic and social benefits.

## **APPENDIX 1: DESIGNATING CONSERVATION AREAS WHICH INCLUDE C20TH BUILDINGS: GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES**

One of the disheartening aspects of reviewing existing conservation areas has been seeing C20th buildings described as making a detrimental, or at best neutral, contribution to the area, or dismissed as 'unfortunate', 'unsympathetic', and 'over-scaled'. Even when C20th built heritage is recognised in the character assessment as making a positive contribution, it doesn't always benefit from the same level of research and analysis afforded to older areas. In some cases, C20th development has been specifically excluded from the boundary of the conservation area. Whilst it is true that some C20th development was ill-considered (as is true of development of any period), this report argues for C20 buildings and planning to be researched and assessed on their own terms, rather than being automatically seen as an unsympathetic intrusion on the architecture of earlier periods.

The following good practice guidelines are intended to reinforce the work already being done by some local authorities and heritage practitioners to appropriately recognise the contribution of their C20th built heritage.

- 1) **Research:** Research the C20th buildings in the area as thoroughly as the older ones, so that they can be assessed on their own merits. Avoid assuming that any additions after a certain date are necessarily detrimental.
- 2) **Maintenance:** Try not to let poor maintenance of the building or surrounding public realm obscure the contribution made by the C20th building(s). Recognition of the building's value can encourage improvements in maintenance.
- 3) **Designed to be different:** Consider the materiality, massing and fenestration of the buildings, not just stylistic similarity. Recognise that much post-war development was designed to be unique and eye-catching, rather than to fit in, so its impact should be assessed on these terms. Something that is starkly different may still be making a valuable contribution.
- 4) **New technology:** Buildings from the 1960s are expressions of new technology in built form: big windows and open plan spaces replaced the small windows and rooms required before cheap energy and central heating. While attitudes to energy use have now changed again, these buildings are records of that distinct era.
- 5) **Changing needs:** New needs or life-styles – for increased housing density, different shopping patterns or new commercial requirements – also produce different forms.
- 6) **Planning:** Wartime bomb damage led to comprehensive city centre regeneration and the loss of much earlier fabric. Successful innovative planning, such as new relationships of the car to the pedestrian, should be recognised.
- 7) **Guidance:** Consider whether different guidance is needed to protect the character of the C20th buildings in the area.

In summary, value C20th built heritage as much as that of the Tudor, Georgian or Victorian periods: what looks old-fashioned today will be tomorrow's lost gem.

## **APPENDIX 2**

### List of Potential Conservation Areas

<b>Historic County</b>	<b>Area Name</b>	<b>Local Planning Authority</b>	<b>Record Number</b>
Berkshire	Blossom Avenue, Theale	West Berkshire	<b>01</b>
Buckinghamshire	Energy World	Milton Keynes	<b>02</b>
Buckinghamshire	Woolstone	Milton Keynes	<b>03</b>
Cheshire	The Brow, Runcorn	Halton	<b>04</b>
Devon	Sladnor Park	Torquay	<b>05</b>
Dorset	Poundbury	West Dorset	<b>06</b>
Durham	Peterlee, South West	Easington	<b>07</b>
East Sussex	Furze Hill Hove	Brighton & Hove	<b>08</b>
Essex	Basildon Town Centre	Basildon	<b>09</b>
Essex	Clockhouse Way/Cressing Road	Braintree	<b>10</b>
Essex	Debden Estate Shopping Centre Loughton	Epping Forest	<b>11</b>
Essex	South Woodham Ferrers	Chelmsford City Council	<b>12</b>
Essex	University of Essex, Wivenhoe	Colchester	<b>13</b>
Gloucestershire	Downend, Bristol	South Gloucestershire	<b>14</b>
Gloucestershire	The Ledmore Road Estate	Cheltenham	<b>15</b>
Greater London	The Beaconsfield Estate, Fore Street	L.B.Enfield	<b>16</b>
Greater London	The Highams Estate	L.B.Waltham Forest	<b>17</b>
Greater London	The Somerford Estate	L.B.Hackney	<b>18</b>
Greater London	The Alberta Estate	L.B.Southwark	<b>19</b>
Greater London	The Brandon Estate	L.B.Southwark	<b>20</b>
Greater London	The Lairdale Estate	L.B.Lambeth	<b>21</b>
Greater London	Myatts Fields South	L.B.Lambeth	<b>22</b>
Greater London	Cottington Close	L.B.Lambeth	<b>23</b>
Greater London	Cressingham Gardens	L.B.Lambeth	<b>24</b>
Greater London	Bedzed,Hackbridge	L.B.Sutton	<b>25</b>

Greater London	Barbican and Golden Lane Estates	City of London	<b>26</b>
Greater London	Highgrove Estate, Eastcote	L.B.Hillingdon	<b>27</b>
Greater London	Thamesmead, Lakeside	L.B.Greenwich	<b>28</b>
Greater Manchester	Barton Aerodrome	Salford City Council	<b>29</b>
Greater Manchester	University of Manchester (former Institute of Technology)	Manchester City Council	<b>30</b>
Hampshire	Southampton University Highfield Campus	Southampton	<b>31</b>
Kent	New Ash Green	Tonbridge & Malling	<b>32</b>
Lancashire	Former Leeds Childrens Holiday Camp, Silverdale	South Lakeland	<b>33</b>
Leicestershire	Leicester University	Leicester City	<b>34</b>
Merseyside	The Eldonian Village, Vauxhall	Liverpool City Council	<b>35</b>
Merseyside	Haig Avenue/Beatty Road Estate	Southport	<b>36</b>
Norfolk	Bowthorpe New Villages	Norwich City Council	<b>37</b>
Norfolk	University of East Anglia, Norwich	Norwich City Council	<b>38</b>
Northumberland	Cramlington New Town	Northumberland County Council	<b>39</b>
Northumberland	Swarland Cottage Estate	Northumberland County Council	<b>40</b>
Nottingham	Nottingham University Main Campus	Nottingham City Council	<b>41</b>
Suffolk	Studlands Estate, Newmarket	Forest Heath (West Suffolk)	<b>42</b>
Tyne & Wear	Killingworth Township	North Tyneside	<b>43</b>
Tyne & Wear	Byker Estate	Newcastle City Council	<b>44</b>
Tyne & Wear	Gateshead (Team Valley)	Gateshead Council	<b>45</b>
Tyne & Wear	Washington New Town	Sunderland District Council	<b>46</b>
Warwickshire	Coventry City Centre	Coventry City Council	<b>47</b>

Yorkshire	Gleadless valley Estate, Sheffield	Sheffield City Council	<b>48</b>
Yorkshire	Park Hill estate, Sheffield	Sheffield City Council	<b>49</b>
Yorkshire	Thorp Arch Estate	Leeds City Council	<b>50</b>

Potential Conservation Areas – Data Capture Form Template

POTENTIAL CONSERVATION AREA

AREA NAME: X

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Location (County): X  
 Postcode: X  
 Local Planning Authority: X

Date of record: Recorded created by: Record number:  
 XX August 2017 X 1

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Date Built / Architect / Sources

Date Built: XYZ (detail below)  
 Architect(s): XYZ (detail below)  
 Sources: XYZ

Summary (if various Dates / Styles / Architects)

Date	Style(s)	Architect(s)

XYZ

Assessment (incl. reason for potential designation)

XYZ

Views:

C20 Conservation Areas

## APPENDIX 4

### The Twentieth Century Society Conservation Areas Project

#### Exemplary Project(s) – Draft Criteria

Conservation Area designation provides recognition of the group value of buildings and their surroundings and the need to protect, not just the individual buildings, but the distinctive character of the area. Many components contribute to this special character and sense of place including trees, hedges, boundaries, walls, open spaces, groups of buildings, the degree of enclosure and coherence as well as the size, scale, and detailing of the buildings. Each area is unique and may vary in character, form and size.

The review to date (through the data gathering exercise) of existing conservation areas which have been designated based on the dominant 20<sup>th</sup> century character or appearance of the area has demonstrated an overriding bias towards housing as a building type with that of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century particularly well represented. Taking this bias in the context of drafting criteria for the exemplary project(s) it is agreed that it would be desirable to consider in the first instance a wider range of building types, periods and geographic areas, notwithstanding the limitations attached to the small number of projects, 3-5, as suggested by the brief, and select area(s) where designation is realistic and the local planning authority is supportive.

#### Draft Criteria

- National and local distinctiveness from the perspective of building type and period. Are any of the proposed areas demonstrative of a distinctive building type and period not widely evidenced locally or nationally? Are there landmark qualities inherent in the character of the area? Could one of these areas be considered 'newsworthy' through designation with the potential to highlight the variety of 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings which are valued and should be valued (aside from housing)?
- Is the proposed area dominated by the work of an architect or planner of regional or local note?
- Does the area have significant historic associations with local people or past events?
- Does it reflect the traditional functional character or former uses in the area?
- Consider the main elements, including architectural quality and built form, which contribute to the special character or appearance of the area. Legibility – cohesion of age, style, materials, form and other characteristics? Has there been minimal degradation of these?

## Planning Policy Context

The approach to the consideration of potential conservation areas must be demonstrably compliant with legislation and national and local planning policy objectives.

A Conservation Area is “*an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*” (Planning Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990).

Section 69 of the Act also states (1) every local planning authority –

- (a) shall from time to time determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and*
- (b) shall designate those areas as conservation areas.*

NPPF: 127. “*When considering the designation of conservation areas, local planning authorities should ensure that an area justifies such status because of its special architectural or historic interest, and that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest.*”



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