Demolition

A “conservation area consent” must be obtained from the planning authority for the demolition of most walls, buildings or structures within the area. This does not apply to:

- buildings smaller than 115 cu.m. in volume, or to walls or fences below 1 m. in height abutting the highway (2 m. elsewhere).
- some agricultural buildings.
- partial demolition of industrial buildings (in specific circumstances)
- buildings subject to some statutory notices or orders.

A separate “Listed Building Consent” is required for the demolition or alteration of a listed building (inside or out), or structures within the curtilage of a listed building.

Some buildings have been identified as locally important, and placed on a “Local List”. While they do not enjoy the same protection as those on the statutory list, it is expected that particular care be taken with these buildings and there will be a presumption against demolition.

Repairs

Generally repairs do not need planning permission unless they include alterations which significantly change the external appearance of the building or structure. The essence of repair is that it is carried out on a ‘like for like’ basis, matching materials and details. Where an unoccupied building is not being properly preserved, urgent works can be carried out for the preservation of that building by the local authority.

Restricting Development

In a conservation area, planning permission is required for work that would ordinarily constitute “permitted development”. This includes:

- exterior cladding
- side extensions, or the construction of any other building or structure to the side of the house
- rear extensions of more than one storey
- roof extensions, including insertion of dormer windows
- the installation, alteration or replacement of a chimney, flue or soil and vent pipe visible from the highway
- erection of an aerial or satellite dish facing the highway
- limits on the size of domestic and industrial extensions.

The local authority also has the right to selectively restrict specific development through Article 4 Directions. You are advised to check with the Council before carrying out any alterations.

Trees

Well-established trees make an important contribution to the positive character of the area. Within a conservation area all trees with a stem diameter of over 75mm (measured at 1.5 m above the ground) have a measure of protection since six weeks notice must be given to the Local Authority for any works to, or likely to affect, these trees. Selected trees may have the full protection afforded by a Tree Preservation Order, where the consent of the Local Authority is needed before any work can be carried out on the trees.

Please check with the Council’s arboricultural officer before carrying out works to any tree in a conservation area.
What is a Conservation Area?

This is an area identified as being of special architectural or historic interest – often the historic nucleus of a village or a part of town retaining enough of its historic character to justify protection. Conservation areas aim to protect the overall character of the area, not just particular buildings.

The main objectives of designation are:
- To enable the implementation of conservation policies
- To control the demolition of unlisted buildings and structures within the area
- To control the removal of important trees
- To provide the basis for planning policies designed to preserve or enhance all aspects of the character or appearance that define an area’s special interest. This will include the identification of buildings and structures, open spaces, views, trees and areas of the public realm (streets, spaces and squares) which make positive contributions to the area.

Historical Background

Before the Industrial Revolution changed the commercial face of England, Northampton featured as an important market town. In the northern part of the old town near the North Gate extensive sheep markets were held and this gave the central street of the area its name.

The most prominent historical feature in this part of the town is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, founded by Simon de Senlis on his return from the 1st Crusade. The other buildings within the conservation area date mainly from the late 18th century. Very few of the buildings in this part of the town survived the Great Fire of 1675.

The Conservation Area

This small, peaceful conservation area is formed from part of the historic Sheep Street and is dominated by the soaring spire of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. To the south of the Church the buildings date from the 18th century, or thereabouts, while to the north they are mostly 19th century. The modern buildings include Northgate House and the flats of Sussex Court, both uncomfortably close to the church. A recent development of flats between nos 44 and 50 (The Viewpoint) replaces a former garage.

The absence of through traffic from Sheep Street assists in maintaining the quiet atmosphere, allowing visitors time to investigate the many interesting buildings.

Buildings listed as being of special architectural or historic interest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sheep Street</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 &amp; 43</td>
<td></td>
<td>stone, slate roof</td>
<td>Late C18: stone, slate roof</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 (Regent House)</td>
<td></td>
<td>painted stone, slate roof</td>
<td>Late C18: painted stone, slate roof</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47 (Ex-Servicemen’s Club)</td>
<td></td>
<td>stone, now painted, tiled roof</td>
<td>C18: stone, tioned floor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 (Chancery House)</td>
<td></td>
<td>stone, slate roof</td>
<td>C17: stone, slate roof</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-57 (Oriel House)</td>
<td></td>
<td>painted stucco with parapet, slate roof</td>
<td>C18: stone, painted on ground floor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Late C18: stone slate roof</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56 &amp; 56b (County House)</td>
<td></td>
<td>C1100, with circular nave</td>
<td>Enlarged 1180, 1275.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of the Holy Sepulchre</td>
<td>c.1100</td>
<td></td>
<td>C15 tower and S. aisle. Recently restored.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is one of the few remaining round churches in England. Only nine such churches were ever built, and today only four remain in recognisable form. The original church has a circular nave inspired by the Holy Sepulchre Church in Jerusalem, although it is likely that the particular form of this building was derived from the round churches and baptistries of Northern Italy. The “round” of eight columns dates from c. 1100, and is probably the oldest surviving building in Northampton. A short north aisle was added around 1180. Early 15th century additions included a south aisle, the tower, and porch. Extension and renovations were done by George Gilbert Scott in 1864. Much restoration work has been carried out on the stonework of the Church, which has been suffering the ravages of 20th century pollution. It is one of the most frequently visited buildings in the town, and is especially popular with overseas visitors.

North of the Church, along Regent Square, the character of the conservation area changes. Here is a row of very interesting Victorian buildings which achieves continuity through such features as window styles and provides a varied but cohesive piece of streetscape.

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