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 1m. in height abutting the highway (2m. 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

Repairs do not generally need planning permission unless they include alterations which significantly change the external appearance of the building or structure. Repairs should be carried out on a ‘like for like’ basis, matching materials and details. Where an unoccupied building is not being properly maintained, the Local Authority can carry out urgent works necessary for its preservation.

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 on to, and visible from, the highway,
- erection of solar panels on a wall or roof facing on to, and visible from, the highway,
- limits on the size of domestic and industrial extensions.

The Local Authority may also selectively restrict specific development through Article 4 Directions. You are advised to check with the Council before carrying out 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 1.5m 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 a 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
Northampton's history as a boot and shoe town has been well recognised since the 17th century. It wasn’t, however, until the advent of industrial processes that a significant and lasting effect was seen on the townscape. From the middle of the 19th century, the industry developed with astonishing rapidity, resulting in the long rows of terraced housing and associated factory buildings and community facilities seen today surrounding the historic core of the town. These areas are very important in showing how the Victorians adapted to a new way of working and living - one centred round the factory.

The Conservation Area
The finest remnants of Northampton's boot and shoe industry can be found in the area immediately to the north and east of the town centre (around Lower Mounts up to the Racecourse, Abington Square and down to the Billing Road). This area has the highest density of boot and shoe factories, the greatest survival of buildings (around 70%) associated with the industry, and the widest range of building types in Northampton.

The street layout and buildings within this area show the development of the boot and shoe industry from its origins as a home-based craft through to the establishment of single large factories employing whole teams of workers. The street layout is regimented, with long straight rows of terraces which have long been considered commonplace and ordinary but are now recognised as having unique characteristics and importance.

The oldest surviving buildings are grouped around the area to the west of Overstone Road and the area to the south of Abington Square. Eight of the factories connected (or formerly connected) with the shoe or leather trades are listed buildings (nationally recognised as being of architectural or historic importance). Many of the remaining former factories are included on the Council’s “local list” (which records buildings recognised as being of local importance). Only a small number of factory buildings now remain in the boot and shoe trades, most of the remainder having been converted for residential use.

The conservation area exhibits a number of distinctive features worth preserving. These include long straight streets with regular layout and continuous rooflines, the houses facing immediately on to the street with no front gardens; houses and industrial buildings sitting side-by-side, as you might expect from an era when most people would have walked to work; factories and specialist workshops of different sizes and types, with houses which are usually two-stores, and factories typically no higher than three; the factory buildings often have elaborate designs to illustrate their importance in the community.

A range of social, religious, educational and commercial buildings is interspersed with houses and places of work, providing for all of the community's needs. Chapels and churches occupy key locations dominating the views along the streets. Corner sites tend to be occupied by significant buildings, including shops, pubs and factory entrances. The houses may appear uniform, but closer inspection reveals subtle differences of size and decoration, indicating the status of worker they were intended to house. Trees or public green open spaces are few. The whole adds up to a distinctive townscape of historical value.