

Terms of Reference for Camden's Conservation Area Advisory Committees

December 2024

Summary

Camden's Conservation Area Advisory Committees (CAACs) are voluntary groups, independent of but endorsed by Camden Council. The aims of the CAACs are to promote the preservation and enhancement of Camden's diverse built heritage.

To this end, the CAACs advise the Council on the development and implementation of the Council's Conservation Strategy, on planning applications or Council proposals affecting conservation areas, listed buildings or other heritage assets and on the development of policies for the protection of the historic built environment.

General role and function

The Committees' role:

- To promote the objectives of conservation and to facilitate communication between the public and the Council on matters of conservation, historic buildings and archaeology.
- To provide advice and comment on planning applications affecting listed buildings, conservation areas, locally listed buildings and historic parks and gardens, or their settings.
- To provide assistance and guidance to Council in the preparation of conservation area appraisals, management plans and policy statements related to the conservation areas as well as general planning policies, including land use and transport. This includes the implementation of these statements and policies and their monitoring.
- To act as a source of advice and comments on other schemes promoted by the council that impact on conservation areas.
- To provide advice on the extension of existing conservation area boundaries and the designation of new conservation areas in the Borough.
- To encourage, through the appropriate mechanism, the notification of unauthorised works and non-compliance with any planning approval affecting historic buildings or conservation areas.
- To identify buildings or features which should be considered for statutory listing and other buildings or features of local townscape, historic, architectural or archaeological interest, that may be considered to be non-designated heritage assets as defined in the National Planning Policy Framework and supporting documents. These may include assets included on the Local List.
- To provide written representations on decisions concerning applications which have been appealed and providing evidence at public inquiries.

Membership

The committees should seek to reflect a diverse cross-section of local people residing within the conservation areas.

Considerations for appointment to the Conservation Area Advisory Committee:

- The Committee aims for a broad, locally based membership, to ensure that the Council is able to effectively disseminate and collect local conservation information.
- Membership should predominantly comprise local residents. Camden is one of the most diverse places in the country with communities of people with different identities, pride, cultures and abilities. Participation from all sections of this diverse community is encouraged, irrespective of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, gender identity and expression, pregnancy, maternity, race (which includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), sexual orientation, religion or belief, or because someone is married or in a civil partnership.
- Members of the CAAC should ensure that the views expressed at meetings do not conflict with the views of the body they represent.
- Members may be nominated by local civic and amenity associations, relevant local associations, relevant expert bodies, including national amenity societies, and professional bodies. At the discretion of the CAACs other persons with specialist local knowledge or expertise may be invited as members.
- Members must declare any interests which may prejudice their views on applications or other proposals affecting the conservation area.

CAAC's working procedures

Each CAAC should appoint a Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer, Secretary and other officers at their discretion, to serve for a period of three years consecutively, unless the Advisory Committee decide otherwise.

- Each CAAC shall communicate regularly, meeting, whether face-to-face or remotely, as frequently as necessary for the effective conduct of their duties. A minimum of three persons shall be required when commenting on planning applications.
- The meetings shall not be open to the public, except at the discretion of the CAAC concerned.
- The Chair and other officers shall have the authority to deal with urgent matters on behalf of each CAAC, reporting their action to the earliest available meeting when their action will be recorded. Where the Chair's authority has been exercised, this shall be stated in any correspondence with the Council.
- Each CAAC will undertake to make written observations on applications within 21 days of receipt of the application. These comments may be in the form of an e-form, letter, a minute of a meeting, or on the individual case comment sheets provided by the Council. Each CAAC shall recognise that officers need its prompt response at an early stage in their discussions with applicants.
- The CAAC's comments shall focus on how proposals will impact upon the special architectural or historic character and appearance of the CA.
- At the discretion of each CAAC, architects and other parties whose schemes are under consideration may be invited to explain their proposals at separate meetings held either on site, at their offices or at the Council offices,

whichever is convenient. Arrangements for these meetings will normally be made by the CAAC.

- Each CAAC, at its discretion, may undertake to provide pre-application advice on proposals being prepared in its conservation area, recognising the weight now attached to pre-application consideration. CAACs are encouraged to make any pre-application advice they may make available to the Council when it is made.
- Each CAAC will undertake to contribute to an annual report on conservation in the Borough. This will outline the volume of work carried out that year, numbers of applications considered, key issues in the area and any other relevant matters, including the monitoring of the effectiveness of policy.
- If any Member of the Committee has any pecuniary interest, direct or indirect, in any planning application or other matter before the Committee, that Member shall withdraw from the meeting while the matter is under consideration.

Development management services to be provided to conservation area advisory committees

The Council will ensure that the information accompanying planning applications in conservation areas is adequate to enable the CAACs to assess fully the impact and acceptability of the proposals, in accordance with national and local validation requirements.

Each CAAC shall receive the following:

- E-notification of an application, with a direct link to the application on the Council's website and an online comments form to be submitted by the CAAC.
- The name and contact information of the relevant case officer.
- Re-consultation in the case of significant revisions prior to the application being reported to the Development Control Committee or Member's Briefing Panel.
- Notification in writing, to the Chair or nominee, of the date of any relevant meeting, where a comment has been made by a CAAC on a particular agenda item.
- Notification in writing, to the Chair or nominee, of the decision taken and any conditions, where a comment has been made by a CAAC.
- Notification of any appeals lodged relating to sites within the CA and subsequent information concerning timetables etc.

Sustainability

The world faces a climate emergency. Buildings are a major consideration in addressing this challenge. They are one of the largest contributors of UK carbon emissions and any applications for alteration or adaptation to historic buildings needs to take this into account.

Adapting historic buildings appropriately does not simply mean finding a way of reducing carbon emissions and reliance on fossil fuels. It also means doing so in ways that protects the historic significance and character of those buildings.

Conservation and the sustainable use and reuse of the historic environment is critical to limiting further global warming and the impacts of climate change. Mitigating climate change and conserving historic buildings are compatible goals. However, achieving these goals can be challenging and it is important that both the CAACs and the Council apply concentration to this goal when considering planning and listed building consent applications.

Review

The terms of reference of the Group are subject to review every three years by the Council in conjunction with the CAACs. The CAACs and the Council should work together with mutual respect on both sides.

Appendix

Councillors and officers particularly value advice from CAACs on:

- The significance of heritage assets in their context. This is often a matter where local knowledge offers valuable understanding. It may include architectural character, townscape and landscape value of the building in its setting, visual prominence, unexpected views, and impacts on the conservation area.
- Historical information about an individual building, its place in a group, street, formal or informal setting, and the development of the building. This may include information on architects and designers involved with the building, its inhabitants, or users.
- Details of the building and its forms and materials, and how far they are characteristic of the area, or if they are significant because they are distinctive. Details and forms which reflect technological development, and changing notions of style, may be of particular interest.
- The historical function of a building, and the impact of its use or changes of use on the conservation area.
- Advice on trees in streets, public and private open space.