

ITEM NO.	
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<b>TITLE</b>	<b>: MOUNT PLEASANT CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND RESULTING PROPOSALS FOR POLICIES AND ACTIONS</b>		
<b>TO / ON</b>	<b>: Planning Control Committee</b>	<b>11<sup>th</sup> November 2003</b>	
<b>FROM</b>	<b>: Borough Planning and Economic Development Officer</b>		
<b>STATUS</b>	<b>: For Publication</b>		

**1.0 TYPE OF DECISION**

1.1 What type of decision is to be taken:-

EXECUTIVE DECISION			COUNCIL DECISION	
Key		Non Key	Yes	

1.2 If a key decision, has it been included in the Forward Plan

Inclusion in Forward Plan	No	Date of Plan	
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**2.0 SUMMARY**

The Council's Heritage Strategy commits to a programme of producing conservation area appraisals, ultimately for all 9 of the borough's current conservation areas. Appraisals are aimed at identifying the special characteristics and significance of areas and using this to define the most appropriate policies and actions to achieve their conservation and enhancement. Very similar work has been done in the recent past in support of the implementation plans for the Heritage Economic Regeneration Schemes in Ramsbottom and St Mary's, Prestwich and the Conservation Area Partnership Scheme in Bury town centre.

Mount Pleasant has been chosen for the first full appraisal and will be a pilot for the remaining areas. Part of the reason for putting forward Mount Pleasant is the concern over the erosion of the area's character and the scale of unauthorised

work to the dwellings in the area. Latest records show that 54 dwellings have had some form of unauthorised alteration. There is a need to establish best practice in the area and the appraisal is the accepted method for doing this.

A draft appraisal was prepared in June 2003 (copies of this will be made available to committee members). This was forwarded to all households in the village together with the ward members, interest groups, Northern Counties Housing Association, the Federation of Civic Societies, Bury Local History Society, Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit and English Heritage. All were asked to comment on the appraisal and the residents were asked to complete a questionnaire concerning the accuracy of the document; its assessment of the area, and the proposals for the way forward.

This report makes comment on the key issues in the appraisal, outlines the response to the consultation, and puts forward a range of broad actions covering specific policies; enforcement decisions; guidance for area residents; area enhancement works and the means of implementation.

The report is submitted to Planning Control Committee due to the scale of the development control and enforcement matters involved.

### **3.0 OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDED OPTIONS (with reasons)**

The draft appraisal has revealed the gradual and continuing erosion of the conservation area's character. Consultations have confirmed broad agreement on this conclusion. Bury MBC as local planning authority is responsible for the production of proposals for the preservation and enhancement of the area.

#### **The options are:**

- (a) To try to stem the erosion of the area character by taking a proactive and strong line on development control and enforcement issues; by producing area specific guidance and by direct involvement in area enhancement.
- (b) To take no action other than to deal with listed building consent and planning applications as and when they are submitted. This would give the green light to further unauthorised work and to greater loss of area character and the quality of the listed buildings.

#### **Recommended Option**

It is recommended that option (a) is approved and a strong and consistent action plan is implemented in the area. This will conserve what remains and will, in the longer term, allow the area to recover through careful control and through education and co-operation. The report outlines a broad approach to the action plan and a list of recommendations in Paragraph 8.1 (a) to (h). Subject to Committee's decision more detailed work can be undertaken in discussion with the area residents and English Heritage.

**4.0 THIS REPORT HAS THE FOLLOWING IMPLICATIONS**

**Corporate Aims**

Developing a Stronger Community Spirit -  
◆ celebrate the heritage of local areas  
◆ conserving and protecting the Borough's heritage  
  
Improving Transport and the Environment.

**Policy Framework**

Bury MBC's Heritage Strategy  
PPG 15 Planning and the Historic Environment  
Current UDP and UDP Review  
Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

**Statement by  
Monitoring Officer**

**Statement by  
Director of Finance  
&  
E-Government**

**Human Resource  
IT/Land and  
Property  
Implications**

**Wards/Area Boards  
affected**

Moorside Ward  
Bury East Area Board

**Scrutiny Panel's  
Interest**

**Consultations**

All Conservation Area households. English Heritage and the Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit. Federation of Civic Societies. Northern Counties Housing Association. Bury Local History Society. Ward Members.
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**Call-in**

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**Briefings**

Executive Members/ Chair	No	Chief Executive	No
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**5.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 5.1 The Council's Heritage Strategy commits to a programme of producing conservation area appraisals, ultimately for all 9 of the borough's conservation areas. Appraisals are aimed at identifying the special characteristics and significance of areas and using this to define the most appropriate policies and actions to achieve their conservation and enhancement. Very similar work has been done in the recent past in support of the implementation plans for the Heritage Economic Regeneration Schemes in Ramsbottom and St Mary's, Prestwich and the Conservation Area Partnership Scheme in Bury town centre.
- 5.2 Guidance from English Heritage, the government and other national heritage bodies recommends that all conservation areas should be the subject of appraisals. They are seen as essential to the understanding of area character, in identifying threats to that character and in helping to form policies and action. They are also seen as being essential to dealing with proposals for development and a key to good management.

**6.0 BACKGROUND**

- 6.1 Mount Pleasant has been chosen for the first full appraisal and will be a pilot for the remaining areas. Part of the reason for putting forward Mount Pleasant is the concern over the erosion of the area's character and the scale of unauthorised work to the dwellings in the area. There is a need to establish best practice and the appraisal is the accepted method for doing this.
- 6.2 Many of the original properties in the area are listed buildings. The former mill was de-listed at the time of its conversion but the planning approval for residential redevelopment on its site was conditional on permitted development rights being removed. As a consequence detailed control exists over virtually all properties in the village with even fairly minor alterations requiring either listed building consent or planning permission.
- 6.3 Unfortunately, many changes to properties in the area have been made without the necessary permissions. In officers' opinion, these changes range from acceptable to completely inappropriate. Some enforcement action has been taken by the

Council but a large number and variety of issues remain unresolved. At the latest count, 54 properties have had some form of unauthorised alteration. Although some of these could be classed as minor, they can still have a cumulative effect. Despite written guidance being frequently issued to residents, attitudes vary and confusion is evident. There is a residents' association and a conservation committee in the area. These groups help with information and guidance. However, in some instances they are frustrated by the actions of some of the house owners. Looking at the situation from the residents' viewpoint, many have previously complained of an inconsistent approach from the Council.

## **7.0 ISSUES**

7.1 A draft appraisal was prepared in June 2003 (copies of this will be made available to committee members). The appraisal was forwarded to all 87 households in the village together with the Ward Members, interest groups, Northern Counties Housing Association, the Federation of Civic Societies, Bury Local History Society, Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit and English Heritage. All but the Ward Members were asked to comment on the appraisal and the residents were asked to complete a questionnaire concerning the accuracy of the document; its assessment of the area, and the proposals for the way forward.

7.2 The appraisal covered the following subjects. Please refer to the attached draft appraisal for the full discussion of the relevant issues:

- ◆ The geography and physical setting of the village
- ◆ The history and archaeology of the village
- ◆ An assessment of its architecture and environment
- ◆ Architectural detail and features
- ◆ The value of open spaces
- ◆ The impact of recent changes
- ◆ A broad way forward and the next steps

7.3 Under the heading of The Way Forward it recommended 6 proposals. These are:

- (a) The factory village of Mount Pleasant is a designated conservation area and contains many listed buildings. Its status reflects its importance as an area of real and special heritage value. The area residents must respect this in what they do to their property and land, and the Council must take appropriate action to support and enforce those responsibilities.
- (b) It will be necessary for the worst of the unauthorised alterations to buildings and land to be rectified. This will need to be done over an agreed period with individual owners and in response to particular circumstances. Each situation will be dealt with on its merits within an agreed and consistent policy.
- (c) Any new unauthorised alterations taking place will be the subject of appropriate action by the Council. The current list of unauthorised changes will be assessed to establish the best course of action. This may have to involve separate discussions with each of the property owners concerned.

- (d) The Council will prepare a policy and guidance document to assist residents, and others, to comply with best practice when altering their properties. This will also outline the detail of planning and listed building controls and their legal implications. Within this the need for modern day requirements and equipment will be accommodated. Whilst there will be room for compromise, there will also be some changes that will not be acceptable in principle. Examples of these may be the painting of stonework, the use of all types of UPVC windows, and the prominent siting of satellite dishes.
- (e) The Council will continue to consider programmes for environmental works in the area. These could deal with minor works in and around the village removing eyesores and improving views and facilities. These are envisaged to be small scale works where area residents may also be involved in discussions over design or in undertaking their own improvements.
- (f) The extension to the conservation area outlined in this appraisal will be recommended for acceptance.

7.4 The appraisal also outlined the next steps in terms of the reporting of the draft to Committee and seeking authority for an action plan.

7.5 In response<sup>14</sup> completed questionnaires were received from the area's 87 households together with observations from the area conservation group, the Federation of Civic Societies, and English Heritage. From recent discussions with area residents it appears that the low response rate is due to general satisfaction with the document rather than a lack of interest.

7.6 All the responses from the residents were complimentary and positive about the draft appraisal. The key comments received from area residents related to Questions 3 and 4 - Assessment of Character and Proposed Way Forward. In summary these are :

- (a) The need for consistency and determination from the Council in dealing with development proposals
- (b) The Council should sustain its interest in the area – it has not always done so in the past
- (c) The Council should consider the cost to residents of conservation policies
- (d) The Council should keep focused on the area
- (e) The residents should support the Council's efforts
- (f) The Council should repair the walls and stone sett roadways ( 3 separate comments)
- (g) The character of the area has been damaged by the extensive planting of trees which threaten open views and its moor land setting (2 separate comments)
- (h) Extensions are not part of the area's character and should not be allowed
- (i) Stone cleaning should not be allowed
- (j) Strong control is essential
- (k) The Council should take action against unauthorised works to buildings

- (l) Action should be taken now against those people who do not follow the conservation rules (2 separate comments)
- (m) The current proposals may be too late to save the area's character – much was lost when the mill was redeveloped (2 separate comments) – and the housing association scheme is a poor quality replacement (2 separate comments)
- (n) Car parking issues/problems for owners and visitors need to be tackled (2 separate comments) – screened car parking area required, bus turnaround area suggested
- (o) Too many caravans and trailers
- (p) Comments about the high turnover of residents and the damage this causes through unauthorised alterations
- (q) Some of the features and artefacts referred to in the assessment are not part of the area's original character
- (r) Need to remind people of the controls and why the area is so special
- (s) Need to ensure that the area is not over controlled and over regimented in its character

7.7 The response from English Heritage stated that it welcomed the action of Bury MBC in carrying out the appraisal. It considered that the contents of the appraisal were thorough and addressed the specific characteristics and pressures affecting this conservation area. English Heritage see the study as an ideal opportunity to address the various long-standing problems of unauthorised works and loss of original detail within the conservation area. The Historic Areas Advisor looks forward to working with Bury MBC on its implementation.

Similarly supportive comments were made by the Mount Pleasant Conservation Group and the Federation of Civic Societies. Both also made suggestions in terms of additional information and some corrections.

## **8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.1 In response to the appraisal and the observations received Planning Control Committee is asked to authorise the following actions:

- (a) The extension of the conservation area to include the planted areas to the west of the village. This is shown on page 4 of the appraisal.
- (b) This should follow additional works for the management of this area of trees, including the removal of sections of woodland to re-open and control views into and out of the village.
- (c) For the Council to undertake a phased programme of minor repair and improvement work to the sett road way within the village and to propose additional areas for car parking in locations and to designs that would not adversely affect the character of the area. These new spaces will be on land within the Council's ownership and will be available for rent to area residents.

- (d) The production of a Mount Pleasant Design and Enhancement Guide to assist all residents in improving their properties in a sympathetic way and also the Council in its enhancement proposals. This should cover gap sites and open land, extensions, materials, windows and doors, cleaning of stonework, architectural details, garages, and detailed alterations, and should allow for some variety in dealing with detailing. It is suggested that consultants are engaged to produce this guidance as soon as possible.
- (e) The appraisal makes reference to the damage to area character caused by a range of alterations. One of the most harmful is the use of UPVC (plastic) materials. Committee is asked to confirm that new UPVC windows, doors and detailing shall not be authorised.
- (f) Authority for officers to negotiate the removal of unauthorised UPVC additions to buildings and to report back with a view to formal enforcement action being taken where progress cannot be made.
- (g) Authority for officers to negotiate on the relocation or painting of such features as satellite dishes, aerials and alarm boxes, and other unauthorised additions to buildings, and to report back with a view to formal enforcement action being taken where progress cannot be made.
- (h) Action on a range of other alterations to await the outcome of the production of the design guide.

**BRIAN DANIEL**  
**BOROUGH PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICER**

***Background documents:***

Mount Pleasant Draft Conservation Area Appraisal, June 2003.  
Survey of Unauthorised Development Work at Mount Pleasant.  
Bury MBC's Heritage Strategy

***For further information on the details of this report, please contact:***  
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