

REPORT FOR DECISION

Agenda Item	
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MEETING: PLANNING CONTROL COMMITTEE

DATE: 28 JUNE 2005

SUBJECT: CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND ACTION PLAN, POPPYTHORN CONSERVATION AREA.

REPORT FROM: BOROUGH PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

CONTACT OFFICER: M NIGHTINGALE, CONSERVATION OFFICER, ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

TYPE OF DECISION: Key

REPORT STATUS: For Publication

PURPOSE/SUMMARY:

Poppythorn Conservation Area was designated on the 31 March 2004. The designation report outlined the need for the preparation of conservation area appraisals and action plans and recommended the involvement of the local community in the process. From 2005/06 this area of work will contribute to the Council's Best Value Performance Indicators. Consultants were engaged to produce an appraisal and to put forward recommendations for the action plan, and their final report was received in January 2005. The local community was consulted on the report in April 2005, and the results of the appraisal and the consultation are now put forward for decision by this committee. A draft of this report was sent to the area residents in May 2005 as part of the consultation.

OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDED OPTION (with reasons):

The options are as follows:

- (a) To accept the appraisal as the basis for the management and enhancement of the Conservation Area and the proposals listed in paragraph 2.6 (a to f) in this report as the broad action plan.
- (b) To reject the appraisal and proposed broad action plan.

(c) To accept option (a) subject to amendment by Committee.

Option (a) is recommended for the following reasons:

- (1) The appraisal is the result of a detailed study of the area's history and architectural character.
- (2) The broad action plan responds to the issues raised in the appraisal and the community consultation.
- (3) The broad action plan identifies areas of additional work to be undertaken together with interim arrangements.

IMPLICATIONS -

Financial Implications and Risk Considerations

Corporate Aims/Policy Framework:

Do the proposals accord with the Policy Framework? **Yes**

1. Developing a Stronger Community Spirit.
 - celebrate the heritage of local areas.
 - conserving and protecting the Borough's heritage.
2. Improving Transport and the Environment.
3. Bury MBC's Heritage Strategy.
4. PPG 15 Planning and the Historic Environment.
5. Current UDP and UDP Review.
6. Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Are there any legal implications?

Yes No

Considered by Monitoring Officer:

Comments

Statement by Director of Finance and E-Government:

Staffing/ICT/Property:

There are no property implications arising directly from this report.

Officer time will be required to produce follow up work, and this is a priority due to new Best Value Performance Indicators from 2005/06 onwards.

Wards - Holyrood

Wards Affected:

Boards - Prestwich

Scrutiny Interest:

There was a separate report to the Scrutiny Commission in February 2004 covering the whole of the Council's conservation and built heritage/environment service.

TRACKING/PROCESS**DIRECTOR:**

Chief Executive/ Management Board	Executive Member/ Chair	Ward Members	Partners
No	Copy letter 23 March 2005	Copy letters 23 March and 19 May 2005	
Scrutiny Panel General report February 2004	Executive	Committee This report	Council
	No		

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This report summarises the results of the area consultation that took place during April 2005 and which sought feedback on the conservation area appraisal and action plan report prepared by consultants. A course of action is now recommended in response to the consultant's report and the consultation comments received.
- 1.2 The consultant's report has been placed on the Council's website since March 2005. Copies will also be placed in the Council Members' lounge in advance of this committee meeting.
- 1.3 On the 23 March 2005 the Council wrote to every property within the Poppythorn Conservation Area summarising the appraisal and action plan and explaining the proposed arrangements for consultation. A questionnaire accompanied the letter. In addition to the information on the website, copies of the consultant's report were made available in Prestwich Library, and two drop-in sessions were arranged for residents to discuss the report with the Council's Conservation Officer at the library.
- 1.4 The area residents were asked to complete and return the questionnaire, and/or to give any comment verbally or via letter or e-mail. In total 14 responses were received from a total of 110 properties in the conservation area. A draft of this report was sent to the area residents in May 2005 as part of the consultation. No further comments were received by the 16th June 2005. Any observations received will be made known to Committee at its meeting.

2.0 ISSUES**Summary of Appraisal and Action Plan**

- 2.1 The following is a summary of the main points of the consultant's report, which is the same as given in the letter to the area residents.

2.2 The report is in two main parts. Firstly, the report assesses the area's history and the detail of its special architectural character. Within this the boundary of the conservation area is checked to see if it correctly reflects the area of special interest and character. The report does confirm the current boundary. Secondly, and based on the assessment of the area's character, it considers the question of current and future change to the area and its buildings. From this come policies and proposals for the control of development and alterations to buildings, and ideas on how the public areas could be enhanced. A summary of the main conclusions and recommendations for action is as follows.

- The area is reasonably well preserved but a range of changes to properties are taking place and if they become more widespread the character of the area would be damaged. Some of the changes referred to involve windows, doors and satellite dishes. Residents should be encouraged to reinstate and not remove original features during work to their properties.
- The production of design guidance for the extension/alteration of properties is necessary and this should be in the form of Supplementary Planning Guidance. This term means that it would be a formal policy document approved by the Council following local consultation and used in assessing planning applications. This will be superseded by a Supplementary Planning Document under the new arrangements for the review of the Unitary Development Plan.
- The Council should consider the making of Article 4 directions. These remove existing rights to make small-scale alterations and extensions without planning permission, and they bring under control virtually all extensions and alterations to residential properties. The alternative to these would be the operation of a voluntary design code based on guidance (the Supplementary Planning Guidance referred to above) issued by the Council with the fall back position being the making of an Article 4 Direction if the code proves not to be effective.
- Broad recommendations and guidance are given covering changes to the following
 - side and rear extensions
 - roofs
 - doors, windows and joinery
 - loft conversions
 - satellite dishes and burglar alarms
 - chimney stacks
 - rainwater goods
 - brickwork
- The report considers that any proposals for the redevelopment of sites to create apartment blocks should be resisted.

- Trees are viewed as important to the appearance of the conservation area and they should be retained, or replaced if removal is necessary or trees die.
- Some changes to the streets need to be addressed using more appropriate materials and changing details such as lighting columns.
- Much can be done through a programme of repair and maintenance to restore some of the character of the area's streets. The existing mini roundabout is visually intrusive and the combination of associated signs and street furniture have a negative impact. Additional traffic calming would be contrary to the area's character.

2.3 From the content of the appraisal, the Council may also wish to consider some additional points. These may cover –

- Confirming that the conservation area should remain 100% in residential use.
- Making specific policies for the protection and enhancement of the triangle area between Langley Road and Glebelands Road.
- Making specific policies to protect the appearance of a number of streets where boundary walls, gateposts and front gardens are key parts of the area's character.
- Attempting to deal with the problem of the partially derelict garage court on Poppythorn Lane.

Resident Response to Appraisal and Action Plan

2.4 The questionnaire asked both general and specific questions and also requested any additional detail and comments that the residents wished to make. The areas covered were, the broad proposals put forward by the consultants; the stricter planning controls proposed; detailed design guidance; the format and usefulness of the report, and the appropriateness of the consultation process. The responses were as follows.

- In strictly numerical terms, there was a 66% (of responses) support for the overall proposals within the appraisal, though within this there was a variation in terms of the importance of individual issues.
- There was an approximate 50/50 split in views about stricter planning controls and some were tied to questions about grants, the cost of specialised repairs, and the availability of skilled craftsmen. There was more support for design guidance but again the cost of repairs is an issue.
- All but two of those that responded found the document useful and easy to understand. There was one comment saying that the whole process was a waste of time and resources.

- All but one consultee thought that the consultation was a good way of seeking views. However, the consultation only generated a 14% written response.

2.5 Those that responded, and who came to the library drop-in, raised a number of specific points.

- Considerable concern was expressed about rat running generally and particularly along Guest Road and Poppythorn Lane, which provides a link between Bury Old Road and the New Road in Prestwich Village. Suggestions put forward were, to make Guest Road a cul-de-sac with a turning point at the Bury Old Road junction, to make Guest Road one-way, or the introduction of a 20mph speed control. In contrast, there were conflicting comments about the effectiveness of traffic calming, using the mini-roundabout as an example, and its impact on the area's character.
- Trees in the pavement were raised as a problem in restricting safe pedestrian access. In addition complaints were received that the Council is not acting in a co-ordinated way in dealing with these issues, particularly along Langley Road where work to tree roots began in 2004 and is still incomplete leaving pedestrians no option but to walk along the roadway.
- There was support for improved street lighting and for this to be done in character with the conservation area.
- Many responses requested grant aid from the Council to support the additional cost of repairs or improvements.

2.6 A letter will be sent to all area residents following committee's consideration of this report. The letter will outline committee's decisions and time scale for action. It will also answer questions raised via the consultation.

Recommendations for Action Plan

2.7 It is suggested that at this stage the action plan can only be agreed in broad terms. Committee is asked to accept the appraisal report and the action plan proposals, and to adopt the following policies as the first part of the action plan.

- (a) To accept the character assessment and appraisal as the beginning of design guidance for the conservation area and which should be developed into detailed guidance. Appraisals are currently underway in the All Saints Conservation Area in Whitefield and St Mary's Park Conservation Area in Prestwich. These areas share many architectural characteristics with the Poppythorn Conservation Area. Subject to the conclusions of the other two appraisals, it is proposed to produce a single guidance document for all three conservation areas. This will be done as soon as resources allow. Until such time as the guidance is produced, officers will provide specific advice on

request and this will be based on the appraisal's recommendations. Up until recently this kind of guidance would be put forward as UDP Supplementary Planning Guidance to be formally accepted by Committee. It is now proposed that the guidance receives Committee's support and that it is ultimately absorbed as a Supplementary Planning Document within the new arrangements for the Local Development Framework.

- (b) For the time being, it is proposed to achieve the sympathetic conservation of the area via voluntary compliance with the above guidance, and to review the need for stricter planning controls at regular intervals in the future. Whilst stricter controls are within the Council's powers, it may be premature to introduce an Article 4 Direction within 18 months of designation. There are also compensation issues to be considered which may apply in very limited instances where permission is refused.
- (c) To confirm that the land and buildings within the conservation area should remain 100% in residential use.
- (d) To resist proposals for the redevelopment of buildings which contribute to the character of the conservation area.
- (e) That enhancement and management proposals be prepared for the conservation area and that these should take on board the recommendations of the appraisal and the issues raised through the consultation. In particular they should include proposals for street lighting, trees, highway and traffic issues, the garage court on Poppythorn Lane, other elements of the streetscene such as boundary walls, and the Langley Road/Glebelands Road triangle. The proposals should also be conscious of future maintenance and management costs. They should be used in the bidding for funds to support the works and, in the interim, all parts of the Council should ensure that the character of the conservation area is fully respected when alterations to the public realm are made. The specific matter of rat-running will also be referred to the Borough Engineer for consideration within the Local Safety Scheme programme.
- (f) Outside the special schemes, such as the Ramsbottom Town Centre and Prestwich Heritage Economic Regeneration Schemes (where grants are aimed at securing the future use of buildings), the Council does not normally make grants available for repair and restoration work in Conservation Areas. The Council does operate a Buildings at Risk grant scheme aimed at saving and securing threatened historic buildings (largely listed buildings), with an annual budget of £15,000. It is proposed to investigate good practice elsewhere in Conservation Areas together with the effectiveness and value of grant aid to private property. If a policy change is to be proposed a further report will be submitted to this committee.

3.0 CONCLUSION

- 3.1 It is proposed that the appraisal is accepted as the basis for the ongoing management and enhancement of the Poppythorn Conservation Area. Paragraphs 2.6 (a to f) are put forward as the broad approach to the action plan and each area will be developed and brought together into a final action plan document in due course.

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

List of Background Papers:-

Report to Executive on the 31 March 2004.

Consultant's Final Report

Letter of consultation to residents 23 March 2005

Questionnaire produced for area consultation.

Returned questionnaires together with letters and e-mails giving responses etc.

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