

REPORT FOR DECISION

Agenda Item	
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MEETING: PLANNING CONTROL COMMITTEE

DATE: 20 December 2005

SUBJECT: Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, All Saints Conservation Area, Whitefield.

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:

All Saints Conservation Area was designated on the 31 March 2004. The designation report outlined the need for the preparation of a conservation area appraisal and action plan 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 June and July 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 October 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 2.9 (a to i) in this report as the broad management plan, and to approve the recommended extension to the conservation area boundary.
- (b) To reject the appraisal and proposed broad management plan.

- (c) To accept option (a) subject to amendment as specified 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 management plan responds to the issues raised in the appraisal and the community consultation.
- (3) The broad management 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 Review.
6. Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Are there any legal implications?

Yes No

Considered by Monitoring Officer:

The proposals are within the Council's powers relating to conservation areas subject to obtaining the consent of individual property owners to works as necessary.

Statement by Director of Finance and E-Government:

There are no financial implications, other than the use of existing staff time, arising from the results of the appraisal and the consultation. The report includes a recommendation that any Council proposals for street lighting, signage, car parking, highway safety, other elements of the streetscene eg boundary walls and proposals for landscaping, parks and open space should respect the character of the conservation area when alterations are made. Members' attention is drawn to the fact that no additional funding has been made available for these works and any increased costs would need to be met from existing budgets, with works in the conservation area

being considered alongside other priorities in the normal way.

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 Affected:

Ward - Pilkington Park

Board – Whitefield and Unsworth

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 24 June 2005	Copy letters 24 June and October 2005	English Heritage letters June and October 2005
Scrutiny Panel	Executive	Committee	Council
General report February 2004	No	This report and report in March 2004	

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This report summarises the results of the area consultation that took place during June and July 2005 and which sought comment 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 June 2005. Copies will also be placed in the Council Members’ lounge in advance of this committee meeting.
- 1.3 On the 24 June 2005 the Council wrote to every property within the All Saints Conservation Area (and to those suggested for inclusion within the 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 Whitefield Library,

and two publicised 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 13 (7%) written responses were received from a total of 182 properties contacted. A draft of this report was sent to the area residents in October 2005 as part of the consultation. Any further observations received will be made known to Committee at its meeting.
- 1.5 There is a need to clarify the terminology in this report. The appraisal and the action plan are the work commissioned from the consultant. The management plan will be based on the consultant's work and the community consultation. It will be the Council's future management plan for the protection and enhancement of the area. These are the terms used by English Heritage and in the Best Value monitoring.
- 1.6 The report detail is in the following order:

The consultant's appraisal and action plan.

The residents' response to the appraisal and action plan.

The Council's proposals for the management plan after consideration of the consultant's work and the residents' comments.

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 appraisal report assesses the area's history and the detail of its special architectural character. It considers the origins and development of the area and the particular elements of the area that make it special. These issues are considered in some detail. Within this, the boundary of the conservation area is checked to see if it correctly reflects the area of special interest and character. The consultants have recommended the extension of the conservation area along parts of its eastern boundary taking in the area around the Metrolink station, buildings along Bury New Road and those at the junction of Pinfold Lane and Moss lane.
- 2.3 Based on the assessment of the area's character, it considers factors which have a positive, negative and neutral impact on the conservation area. From this overall assessment come policies and proposals for the control of development and alterations to buildings, and ideas on how the public areas could be enhanced. This is referred to as the Action Plan.
- 2.4 A summary of the main conclusions and recommendations for action is as follows.

The negative features which act against the area's special character are seen to be

- poor maintenance of some of the wooded areas
- poor definition between the park area and the thickly wooded Uplands site
- pockets of newer out of character development
- the condition and appearance of some of the back lanes
- commuter and other car parking on Church Lane, Hamilton Road and Grosvenor Road
- garish commercial signage along Bury New Road
- recent loss of street trees
- the current appearance of the former Hearse House on Church Lane
- damage and alteration to important boundary walls
- loss of traditional paving materials
- the poor appearance of some car parks
- visual clutter created by poorly designed and located highway signage

General policies are put forward to protect important buildings, open spaces and trees and hedges. These also cover the future use of land and buildings and the density of future development.

The action plan addresses the issue of extending and altering existing properties and explains the damage to the character of the area that has resulted from some alterations. It puts forward policies covering extensions, cladding, satellite dishes, dormer windows, and windows and doors. It raises the question of planning control and recommends that some extensions and alterations that would not normally require permission from the Council should be brought under control. This is covered in the section headed Article 4 Directions and relates to dwellings within the area.

The consultant's recommendations also cover policies for area improvement. These aim to restore and reinforce the area's character and cover the replacement of trees, hedges and boundary walls; the reinstatement of traditional features and details in buildings, and proposals to tackle car parking and unadopted roads. Recommendations also put forward a strategy to deal consistently with the repair of paving and lighting and the provision of highway signs.

Finally, certain sites and buildings have been highlighted for special consideration and comment. These are All Saints Churchyard; Hamilton Road Park; The Uplands; the former Whitefield Town Hall, and the car park at Slattery's confectioners.

Resident Response to The Appraisal and Action Plan

- 2.5 The questionnaire asked both general and specific questions and also requested any additional 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.
- 2.6 Thirteen written responses were received as a result of the consultation and notes were taken during discussions with residents during the two drop-in sessions in the library.
- 2.7 Overall, there was not a large response from the community. However, most responses were in support of the conservation area, of the consultant's report, the method of consultation, and the policies put forward. The following summary attempts to cover the general themes of the responses. Not all comments were in agreement. There were also some individual issues that are being addressed separately outside this report.

Proposed Area Boundary

- 2.8 The inclusion of Barclays Bank, the GMPTE Metro station, the properties at the eastern end of Pinfold Lane and along Knowsley Road all received resident support. There was some support for the addition of Morley Street and the properties along the eastern side of Bury New Road and at the junction with Moss Lane. However, comment was also made about the very limited architectural quality of the buildings in the southern part of this area. The future of the Church Inn, opposite Barclays Bank, was raised in some responses. One consultee suggested that the boundary should not be amended until issues within the existing boundary already identified had been fully addressed.

Additional Planning Controls

- 2.9 There was strong support for additional controls over what are currently permitted development rights. However, this was very clearly linked to the consideration by the Council of grant aid towards the potentially extra costs involved and support in terms of the availability of skilled craftsmen to undertake the specialist work. There was also a request that the Council enforces controls with vigour and consistency. Some who responded saw the conservation area status as a means of stopping both the overdevelopment of land and the redevelopment of single dwellings for more dense development.

Open Spaces and Trees

- 2.10 Positive comments were made about the recent investment in and upgrading of the local parks, with the exception of the land around the former town hall. Some comments suggested that the work in Hamilton Road Park was incomplete, and one requested the removal of the rubbish

skip in the park. Trees generally were seen as important to the area's character and their loss was noted in the area off Stanley Street by the proposed Metrolink car park. A tree replacement programme was put forward to cover situations where trees had to be removed.

Problem Areas and Eyesores

- 2.11 There was a great deal of concern over the current condition of the former town hall and its immediate site, together with the unkempt state of the park and the pond. This was not only a problem in itself but was also an attractor for anti-social behaviour. Other comments were made about the unattractive appearance of the Metrolink Station and some private car parks.

Highways/Traffic and the Streetscene

- 2.12 There were area wide comments about the increased level of traffic on all the highways and concerns over building foundation damage, particularly along Bury New Road. Some residents linked this with the continuing development of Whitefield in general and additional pressures on the highway system and car parking. The conflict between parking for area residents and for commuters, the school run, office users, car boot events, cricket, and local facilities, was one of the main concerns in the area. Residents on Hamilton Road, Pinfold Lane, and Parklands were particularly concerned about this and the poor parking provision for facilities such as the library and the over-spilling of parking from commercial activities on Bury New Road. There were a number of requests for a residents' car parking scheme. There were additional concerns on Pinfold Lane about highway safety and access due to the speed of traffic along the highway and street parking affecting visibility.

Some comment was made about the streetscene and for the street lighting, highway signage and the treatment of the footways to reflect and respect the traditional character of the area.

- 2.13 A draft of this report was forwarded to all properties on the 3 October 2005. In response, additional comments were made about the Church Inn and the problems created by the conversion of residential properties to commercial uses, particularly at the rear of Bury New Road. The latter will be covered under the management plan. Currently, the Church Inn is being considered for listing by the DCMS against the background of the approved supermarket development to the east of Bury New Road. It is proposed that this process should run its course before its relationship to the conservation area is reviewed.

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 Management Plan

- 2.14 Further work is required to take forward the actions, which make up the proposed management plan. Committee is therefore asked to adopt the following policies as the first stage of the management plan process.
- (a) The conservation area boundary extension put forward by the consultants should be viewed in the context of advice from English Heritage. Part of this recommends that the quality of conservation areas should not be diluted by including areas of marginal heritage value. This advice has been closely followed in recent designations. A strong case has been made in the consultant's report for the extension to include the Metrolink station and Barclays Bank, and also for the area around Knowsley Road and the southern corner of Pinfold Lane. These areas are either comparable in quality to the current area or are central to the area's history. The Morley Street and Bury New Road area put forward for inclusion is less straightforward. Parts of this area are not of special architectural and historic interest and are much altered. Consequently, the areas not put forward for inclusion are Morley Street and the east side of Bury New Road south of the China Lounge restaurant. Significant changes in this area that may impact on the setting of the conservation area can be controlled through current planning policy. However, it is also proposed to include 165 to 173 Bury New Road, which are south of Knowsley Road, and which contain substantial late 19th century buildings of good architectural quality. Committee is asked to designate an extended boundary to the conservation area, and this is shown on the plan appended to this report.
 - (b) It is proposed that the character assessment and appraisal are accepted as the beginning of design guidance for the conservation area and should be developed into detailed guidance. Appraisals are currently underway/complete in the Poppythorn and St Mary's Park Conservation Areas in Prestwich. These areas share many architectural characteristics with the All Saints Conservation Area. Subject to the conclusions of the other 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 the detailed guidance, once produced, is ultimately absorbed as a Supplementary Planning Document within the new arrangements for the Local Development Framework.
 - (d) 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. The residents' comments about grants and specialist contractors are relevant to this issue (see paragraph h below) and there are also compensation issues to be considered which may apply in very limited instances where permission is refused.

- (e) The condition of the former Whitefield Town Hall has caused concern for some time, together with its impact on the park area around. The consultation has highlighted local feeling and this is an issue that goes beyond heritage matters, with the site attracting fly-tipping and anti-social behaviour. There have been discussions with the owners and their architect on a number of occasions since the previously approved nursing home development was not progressed. However, the pre-application schemes so far put forward have not complied with UDP policies and could not be supported. The building and the surrounding land have continued to deteriorate over recent months. Committee is now asked to support priority co-ordinated action by all Council Departments to achieve a resolution to the situation. This should take the form of a multidisciplinary officer group investigating and recommending appropriate actions to an agreed programme. The action will be co-ordinated by the Council's Conservation Officer. This matter may be the subject of further detailed reports in due course.
- (f) The appraisal has identified the listed buildings, buildings of significance and those buildings that make a positive contribution to the conservation area. The Council should resist proposals for the redevelopment or removal of these buildings.
- (g) The action plan identifies a range of proposals that the Council should also resist to protect the character and appearance of the area. These are:
- The removal of trees
 - The development of the large open green spaces
 - The overdevelopment of land and the sites of individual dwellings
 - The change of use of residential properties
 - Out of character building extension and alteration
 - Large areas of curtilage car parking
 - Out of character changes to curtilage boundaries and access points
- (h) 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, signage, car parking, other elements of the streetscene such as boundary walls, and proposals for landscaping, parks and open space. 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 highway safety and parking will also be referred to the Borough Engineer for consideration within the Local Safety Scheme and other programmes.

- (i) Outside the special schemes, such as the Ramsbottom Town Centre and Prestwich Heritage Economic Regeneration Schemes (where grants have been 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. CONCLUSION

- 3.1 It is proposed that the appraisal is accepted as the basis for the ongoing management and enhancement of the All Saints Conservation Area. Paragraphs 2.14 (a to i) are put forward as the broad approach to the management plan and each area will be developed in due course and subject to available resources.
- 3.2 The next steps will involve publishing the management plan and taking forward the individual actions.

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 24 June 2005

Questionnaire produced for area consultation.

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

Notes from drop-in sessions at Whitefield Library

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