
MEETING: PLANNING CONTROL COMMITTEE

DATE: 27 MARCH 2007

SUBJECT: RAMSBOTTOM CONSERVATION AREAS, APPRAISAL
AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

REPORT FROM: BOROUGH PLANNING, ENGINEERING AND
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES OFFICER

CONTACT OFFICER: M NIGHTINGALE, CONSERVATION OFFICER

TYPE OF DECISION: Executive key decision

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION/
STATUS:** This paper is within the public domain

SUMMARY:

This report presents an appraisal of the Ramsbottom, Tanners and Bury New Road Conservation Areas and the main proposals for a joint management plan. This action is in line with Best Value Performance Targets and good practice guidance in community consultation.

OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDED OPTION :

The options are as follows:

- (a) To reject the consultant's report and the core proposals listed in part 5 of the report.
- (b) To accept the consultant's report and the core proposals listed in part 5 of the report.
- (c) To accept the consultant's report and to amend the core proposals.

Option (b) is recommended for the following reasons:

- (1) Further work is necessary to ensure that a relevant and complete management plan is produced.
 - (2) This option is consistent with the results of the community consultation.
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- (3) This option was supported by the Ramsbottom, Tottington and North Manor Area Board at its meeting on the 12 March 2007.
- (4) This option meets the Council's Best Value targets.

IMPLICATIONS -

Corporate Aims/Policy Framework:

Do the proposals accord with the Policy Framework? Yes

Financial Implications and Risk Considerations

Director of Finance and E-Government to advise re risk management

Statement by Director of Finance and E-Government:

Equality/Diversity implications

No

Considered by Monitoring Officer:

Yes

Are there any legal implications?

Staffing/ICT/Property:

The proposals outlined in this report should help to protect and enhance the Council's property holdings within the extended Conservation Area. In particular the proposals aimed at securing the re-use of vacant or under-used property and exercising flexibility in accommodating suitable new uses are welcomed.

Wards Affected:

Ramsbottom

Scrutiny Interest:

Appraisals and management plans have previously been discussed at scrutiny committee.

TRACKING/PROCESS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: EDS

Chief Executive/ Management Board	Executive Member/ Chair	Ward Members	Partners
No		Directly since October 2006 and through the Area Board meeting in March 2007	Full involvement of the Ramsbottom Heritage Society and extensive community consultation
Scrutiny Commission	Executive	Committee	Council
Process included in		This report	

reports to Economy, Environment and Transport Scrutiny Commission in 2004 and 2006			
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1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Ramsbottom Conservation Area was designated in 1977 and extended in 1988 and 2004. At the same time as the 2004 extension, the Tanners and Bury New Road Conservation Areas were designated. Between 2001 and 2005 the commercial part of the town centre benefited from a Council and English Heritage funded Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme, and preparation for this involved an assessment of the character of part of the area and proposals for enhancement. It is considered by government and English Heritage to be good practice to undertake such an assessment for the whole of the Borough's conservation areas. This is usually done in two phases for each area, a character appraisal followed by a published management plan. From 2005/06 this area of work has contributed to the Council's Best Value Performance Indicators. Consequently, the Council has established a programme of appraisals and management plans. Consultants have been engaged to produce an appraisal and to put forward recommendations for a management plan for the three conservation areas in Ramsbottom. The local community was consulted on the consultant's report during October and November 2006, and the results of the appraisal and the consultation were put forward for comment to the Area Board on the 12 March 2007. The Best Value performance targets include for the formal approval of the appraisal for Ramsbottom during 2006/07.
- 1.2 The Council's current priority is to produce appraisals and management plans in line with the current programme. Unfortunately, this means that there is not the officer resource to implement the plans quickly and comprehensively. However, every effort will be made to protect and enhance the conservation areas within the resources available.

2.0 ISSUES/BACKGROUND/CONSULTATION

- 2.1 This report summarises the results of the area consultation that took place during October and November 2006 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.
- 2.2 The consultant's report has been placed on the Council's website since October 2006. Please consult this for a full version of the report (www.bury.gov.uk/environment/landandpremises/conservation/conservationareas/conareaappraisals).
- 2.3 On the 10 October 2006 the Council wrote to every property within the existing conservation areas, and within the proposed extensions, 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 Ramsbottom Library together with a plan showing the proposed boundary changes. A press release was issued but this does not appear to have been taken up by the local papers.

- 2.4 The area residents were asked to complete and return the questionnaire, and/or to give any comment verbally or via letter or e-mail. By the end of December 2006 a total of 15 responses were received out of approximately 2000 properties consulted.
- 2.5 The submission of this report to the Area Board is another part of the consultation on the consultant's work. This was made known through a press release and posters placed in shop windows in Ramsbottom. The Area Board report was also available in the new Ramsbottom Library and on the Council's website.

3.0 SUMMARY OF APPRAISAL AND ACTION PLAN

- 3.1 The following is a summary of the main points of the consultant's report.
- 3.2 The report is in two main parts. Firstly, the report assesses the area's history and the detail of its special architectural character. This is done by breaking the area down into character areas. These are as follows:

- § Albert Street Area
- § Bolton Street (south)
- § Bridge Street/Square Street
- § Bury New Road/Peel Brow
- § Dundee Lane/Nuttall Lane
- § Garnett Street/Spring Street
- § Grants Lane Area
- § Irwell Bridge Area
- § Market Place/Bolton Street (south)
- § Paradise Street/Crow Lane
- § Tanners and Carr

The detailed assessment covers matters such as vistas/views, architectural details, materials, and features that either support or act against the area's conservation. 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.

- 3.3 A significant proposal within the report is the amalgamation and extension of the Ramsbottom Town Centre, Tanners and Bury New Road Conservation Areas. This has resulted largely from the assessment that the whole of the valley character and architecture around the town centre is worthy of protection and enhancement. Areas around Dundee Lane, Nuttall Lane, Carr, Kay Brow, Peel Brow, Callender Street/Victoria Street/Albert Street, Garnett

Street/Buchanan Street/Spring Street, and Church Street/Garden Street are put forward for inclusion.

3.4 In summary, and not in any particular order, the other proposals are:

- (i) The production of a photographic survey of the conservation area and its use as a tool to assess the impact development proposals on area character within the town and views into and out of the area.
- (ii) Closer working between the Council's planning and engineering disciplines and through a public realm audit to produce proposals for more appropriate street lighting and street furniture in the conservation area.
- (iii) Through the same method as ii above, the implementation of a programme of historic street reinstatement and repair and an agreed future maintenance regime.
- (iv) Proposals for appropriate litterbins throughout the area and the management of the wheeled bin system.
- (v) The rationalisation of signage throughout the conservation area based on an area audit and to ensure designs appropriate to their setting.
- (vi) Roller shutters to continue to be resisted in the town centre.
- (vii) Early shop fronts to be recorded. Advertising, shop fronts and shop signs should respect the area character, and the existing shop front design guidance to be more widely promoted.
- (viii) Design advice should be provided for the Borough's conservation areas, and both contemporary and traditional design solutions should be considered.
- (ix) An audit of unauthorised works should be undertaken followed by a programme of appropriate and prioritised enforcement.
- (x) Increased control, through the use of Article 4 Directions, should be considered with the need to gain planning permission for the alteration of windows and doors, porches, roof lights, boundary walls and service equipment. Guidance should be prepared to assist residents in dealing with additional controls and guidance should also be provided covering the maintenance and repair of stone walls.
- (xi) Consideration should be given to introducing a focussed grant scheme to encourage window reinstatement and restoration in specific areas.
- (xii) Pro-active steps to be taken to secure the re-use of empty and underused property.
- (xiii) Continued resistance to the removal of buildings that contribute to the area's special character and appearance.

- (xiv) Consideration to be given to the design of development sites within or on the edge of the conservation area. Specific guidance to be prepared for the Railway Mill site and interim improvement proposals to be put forward.
- (xv) Buildings at risk to be audited and an action to be prioritised and targeted. Flexibility to be exercised in accommodating suitable new uses.
- (xvi) The protection of open spaces from built development and the implementation of suitable maintenance regimes.
- (xvii) The production of additional trail, guidance and information board interpretation to promote the town and inform residents and visitors. To link website and other information.

4.0 Resident Response to Appraisal and Action Plan

4.1 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. Although there was a limited written response to the consultation, all but one of the consultees was positive about the report and the consultation process. Questions were also raised which will be answered in a written response once the outcome of the meetings is known. The detailed responses were as follows.

- Suggestions for other areas for protection including Ramsbottom Lane, Bolton Road West and parts of Shuttleworth.
- Support for boundary extension (66% in favour, 35% no direct comment, 0% against).
- Support stricter planning controls (47% in favour, 6% against, 47% no direct comment), though the Council must be diligent in enforcement and should consider how guidance can reach people before unfortunate changes are made.
- The highways department seems to consistently ignore the conservation principles within the town.
- Can the Council restore a property in the town for heritage centre use.
- Complaints that the Council and the utilities are removing stone setts from many streets and replacing them with tarmac.
- Kate Street and Iris Street put forward for inclusion in the conservation area (already within recommended boundary).
- Include the other reservoirs above Devil Hole lodge.
- Many areas in Ramsbottom need to be looked after better.
- There should be no retrospective action in areas to be included in the conservation area.
- Will there be financial support from the Council?
- Need to stop street furniture cluttering the town.

- New building should follow traditional patterns and detail and should not be of innovative and contemporary design.
- Must avoid the quarry above Bury New Road becoming a future landfill site.
- The Althams Travel Agents frontage should be altered to a more traditional design.
- Expected to see something in the Bury Times or the Rossendale Free Press.
- Suggested door-to-door awareness raising campaign in place of questionnaire.
- UPVC windows may be acceptable if designed to traditional patterns, satellite dishes should be allowed and coloured to blend in to the background.
- Concern about the conflict between anti-social behaviour and the demand for security shutters, without knowing what the answer is.
- Complaints about pavement billboards, some similar comments about planters on the street.
- Difficult to find good builders who can work with traditional methods and materials.
- Conservation can assist in increasing the area's attractiveness and is good for business.
- Problems for residents finding parking spaces near to their homes, permit scheme suggested.
- Consider the upgrading and redesign of back alleyways.
- Suggesting concerts using the Nuttall Park bandstand.
- Upgrade required for the Market Place.
- Look at the potential for mill conversion.
- Some corrections to addresses used for the proposed area extension.

5.0 OFFICER COMMENTS AND PROPOSALS

- 5.1 The consultant's proposals are supported by officers and many can be implemented as soon as time and resources permit. Some recommendations reflect the continuation of current work and policies. In a number of cases the detail of proposals will need to be developed prior to the production of the management plan. It is proposed that the consultant's recommendations are accepted in principle and that officers undertake further work, some elements of which will require additional approval by the Council. The community comments have also been passed to appropriate officers of the Council for consideration. Detailed comments are as follows:

Area Boundary

A number of boundary options were considered in discussions with the consultants and the Ramsbottom Heritage Society. These included parts of Ramsbottom Lane, Bolton Road West and the industrial remains and lodges above Carr. Although Bolton Road West is considered to have merit in being a prominent corridor of stone built 19th century cottages, it is thought to be too large to be an extension to the town centre and will have to be assessed, along with other areas such as Shuttleworth, when the current appraisal programme is complete. Ramsbottom Lane contains a number of interesting stone terraces but these do not have sufficient special group value to merit

inclusion. Very little now remains of the industrial buildings north of Carr and although the water system in the town is an important part of its history, the one remaining lodge that is outside the proposed boundary is separate from the built heritage of the town.

The controls offered by conservation area status come into effect on the date of any Planning Control Committee approval, and they are not retrospective.

Public Realm

The consultants have raised issues associated with the highway system covering street surfaces, street lighting, litter bins, and signage. Following the proposed audit, some rationalisation can be achieved which should help to reduce the adverse affect of street clutter, but additional resources will have to be sought to tackle these matters in a comprehensive way. The appraisal and management plan will be used to seek grant aid where appropriate.

Additional Controls

The introduction of an Article 4 direction is recommended for dwellings. This would require small changes, such as window alteration, to have planning permission. The types of work that would require planning permission is a matter of judgement for the Council and the list could include, windows, doors, small extensions, new walls, hardstandings, porches and rooflights. The removal of normal rights requires careful consideration and it is proposed, subject to approval in principle, that officers investigate this matter further and report in detail to Planning Control Committee at a later date.

Grants

The Council operates a grant system for listed buildings at risk. This has an annual allocation of £15,000 and is used to ensure that listed buildings are kept in good repair and are used. The consultants have recommended the use of a focussed grant scheme for the conservation area and refer to its use to reinstate and restore windows. A similar recommendation has been made by consultants for St Mary's Park Conservation Area in Prestwich. There is support for this in principle and the Council can offer such grants via the same legislation as used for listed buildings. However, it may be that grants should be available in all the Borough's conservation areas. There are also matters of detail such as the level of grants, priorities, grant conditions and criteria, and selection of work and standards, that will need to be clear and approved. Subject to approval in principle and further detailed approval, officers should draw up a grant scheme for all of the Borough's conservation areas.

6.0 COMMENTS OF THE AREA BOARD

- 6.1 The Ramsbottom, Tottington and North Manor Area Board considered a report on the appraisal and management plan at its meeting on the 12 March 2007, and supported the report's conclusions and recommendations.

7.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 It is recommended that the consultant's report be accepted as the appraisal for Ramsbottom Conservation Area. This should be used as the basis for a detailed management plan. The management plan should develop the detail of the core proposals and be published during 2007/08 in line with the Council's Best Value programme. This should be produced in consultation with the Ramsbottom Heritage Society. Some of the proposals within the management plan will require additional approval from the Council before they can be taken forward.
- 7.3 It is recommended that the three conservation areas are amalgamated into one and extended as recommended by the consultants, and that the area is called Ramsbottom Conservation Area. The addresses attached to this report include all properties within the proposed/enlarged conservation area.

List of Background Papers:-

Report to Ramsbottom, Tottington, and North Manor Area Board 12 March 2007.
Final Draft Conservation Area Appraisal and Action Plan Report, The Architectural History Practice Ltd. Autumn 2006.

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