

REPORT FOR DECISION

Agenda Item	
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MEETING: PLANNING CONTROL COMMITTEE

DATE: 15 APRIL 2008

SUBJECT: AFFETSID VILLAGE.
POSSIBLE CONSERVATION AREA DESIGNATION

REPORT FROM: ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, PLANNING, ENGINEERING &
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

CONTACT OFFICER: M NIGHTINGALE, CONSERVATION OFFICER

TYPE OF DECISION: Executive key decision

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

SUMMARY:

In September 2007 a preliminary report was considered by Planning Control Committee, which considered a request that Affetside be considered for Conservation Area status. Committee agreed that there was sufficient merit in the initial case to approve a more in depth assessment. This report is the result of this assessment.

OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDED OPTION:

The options are as follows:

- (a) To accept the report and the recommendation not to designate a Conservation Area.
- (b) To reject the report and approve the designation.
- (c) To require additional investigation and consultation.

Option (a) recommended:

1. The character of the area falls short of the quality of the Borough's other Conservation Areas.

2. The necessary level of protection of the area's structure and environment can be achieved through the existing saved policies from the UDP.
3. There appears little interest from the local community in the possibility of designation and in the need to reverse some of the changes made to properties.

IMPLICATIONS -

Corporate Aims/Policy Framework:

Do the proposals accord with the Policy Framework? Yes

Financial Implications and Risk Considerations

Statement by Director of Finance and E-Government:

Equality/Diversity implications No

Considered by Monitoring Officer:

Are there any legal implications? No

Staffing/ICT/Property:

There are no implications for the Council's land and property holdings arising directly from this report.

Wards Affected:

Tottington

Scrutiny Interest:

The Council's role in the protection and enhancement of Conservation areas has previously been discussed at scrutiny committee.

TRACKING/PROCESS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, EDS

Chief Executive/ Management Board	Executive Member/ Chair	Ward Members	Partners
No	Briefed by e-mail in March 2008	Consultation in January and March 2008	Community consultation in January/February 2008
Scrutiny Commission	Executive	Committee	Council
Reports to Economy, Environment and Transport Scrutiny Commission in 2004 and 2006	No	September 2007 and this report	

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In September 2007 a preliminary report was considered by Planning Control Committee, which considered a request that Affetside be considered for Conservation Area status. Committee agreed that there was sufficient merit in the initial case to approve a more in-depth assessment. This report is the result of this assessment.
- 1.2 Further investigation of the history and character of the area was undertaken during November/December 2007 and the area residents were sent a letter early in January 2008. This explained the basis for the assessment and the implications of Conservation Area status. Residents were asked to give their views. An open meeting was held at the Pack Horse on the 24 January 2008 and this was attended by a representative from the Holcombe Society, the Council's conservation officer and approximately 20 residents. At the meeting, and since, residents were asked to put their views in writing. Unfortunately, the response to this has been poor.

2.0 ISSUES/BACKGROUND/CONSULTATION

2.1 Area History

Affetside is centred on Watling Street, a real and visible record of the Roman Road from Manchester to Ribchester. The line of the road has been confirmed by excavation. However, there is little in the records about Roman finds, only an unsubstantiated story about a coin hoard. The cross immediately to the west of Watling Street, at the centre of the village, is thought to be a replacement of an earlier medieval waymarker. It is a scheduled ancient monument and a listed structure and its description refers to a post medieval (after 16th century) main shaft, which would have been topped with a ball or cross. The functions of such crosses varied from waymarker and boundary marker to meeting point, a market, or a place for proclamations or preaching. Its position is on a high point on the Roman road, close to an established crossing point of Watling Street. The route, which crossed Watling Street, was part of a well-established way from Bolton to Rossendale and also links the cross at Bradshaw with the Pilgrim's Cross on Holcombe Moor, on route to Whalley. This suggests the cross's prime use as a waymarker. This longstanding and important meeting of routes is the primary factor in the settlement's history.

The route running north east to Rossendale is referred to as Tom Nook, and also as Blacklane in many documents, and was mentioned in the court rolls of 1531. The route to the west and Bradshaw was via Slack Lane. All routes did once meet directly at the cross, but Slack Lane was diverted near to Watling Street before 1840. The route fell into disuse after the turnpike improvements and the deep hollow marking the lane later in-filled.

During medieval times Watling Street was the boundary between the manors of Bolton and Tottington and the parishes of Bolton and Bury, and Affetside was referred to in the written records of the Tottington Manorial Court meeting in 1504. Tenanted farming had been established to the west, in Bradshaw, since the 16th century. A large area of common land was recorded to the east of Watling Street in the 16th century and its enclosure took place in two stages during the 17th century. Prior to enclosure its common land status would have restricted its improvement and the quality of pasture would not have been as

good as on the tenanted land to both the east and west. After enclosure the land was improved and farms established. Consequently, the dates for the buildings in this part of Affetside are originally of the late 17th or 18th century. Farming was the primary use of land in the area, but it is known that coal mining and stone quarrying was also active from the 17th century onwards.

It has been said that the Pack Horse Inn is of early date but there is no written evidence for this. Its position at the crossing point close by the cross suggests that the village grew around this point, and photographs of the building taken before the rendering of its walls suggest that the current building is 17th or 18th century. The Pack Horse contained a smithy in the 18th century and an 1848 plan of the area shows a more substantial group of buildings associated with the inn and running down to Tom Nook, the main route to the north east.

The nature of the land immediately east of Watling Street would have offered little in the way of farming. The picture may have been one of rough pasture providing subsistence for a handful of isolated farms. Dates that appear in records relate to the 17th and 18th centuries. Records refer to the following – Bradshaw Head 1670, Holts/Yeoman's Farms 1694, Howarth's Farm 1696, Birtle's Farm 1700, Farnworth's Farm 1720, Woods Tenement 1738, Virgin's Inn 1764, the blacksmith's forge at Smithy Fold 1794, and Mum's Harris Farm 18th century. During the 18th century the settlement had 5 alehouses (Pack Horse, Barnwell, Peel Arms, Height Top, and Virgin's Inn) and 3 smithies, and coal mining took place until the sources were exhausted in the 1860s. The mining was based on coal outcrops and there was a colliery to the south east of the cross. There may have been a period of growth during the 18th and early 19th centuries, possibly based on some domestic hand loom weaving and mining. The prosperity of the early 19th century led to the building of the Congregational Church/School in 1840. However, the turnpike road improvements at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th led to Affetside being largely bypassed, and to its decline. Maps from 1848 onwards show a small loss of buildings along Watling Street, until the village became something of a dormitory location during the 20th century. Modest infill development continued throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.

2.2 Area Character

The character of the settlement is a little unusual in that it is a ribbon of development sitting, largely, on one side of Watling Street, in an exposed location on top of a hill. The surrounding land is both open and flat. It does not provide natural shelter and there is little in the way of tree or shrub cover. Away from Watling Street the land is set out in an enclosed system, now more open than during earlier times, and containing individual farms spaced away from each other. Many of the earlier buildings on these individual farms are set gable to Watling Street, either to best resist the driving westerly wind or take advantage of the sun to the main elevations. Many of the farms mentioned in the area's history above still remain, primarily to the east of the main highway. The terraces in the heart of the village face onto Watling Street. There are stone walls and raised banks to each side of Watling Street, and these have shrubs and stunted trees at points along their length. Elsewhere there are small planted copses and garden panting.

Building is in stone with stone flag or slate roofs. All but a few buildings are two storeys, and there are a handful of modern bungalows. The amount of new development is limited and discreetly located. There has not been an opportunity to assess the majority of the local farms but those viewed from the highway, together with the terraces of cottages, are largely in coursed stonework. The size and coursing of the stone and detailing of window openings is mainly consistent with an 18th or early 19th century date. The 17th and 18th century dates given above for the farm settlements do not carry through into the current architectural styles, with only parts of Smithy Fold, Bradshaw Head, Mum's Harris Farm, and Butcher's Farm giving indications of early buildings. Photographs from the late 19th century show views up and down Watling Street around the cross. Some earlier buildings, possibly from the 17th century, are shown within the terrace to the south of the cross. These appear to be in poor condition and the conclusion must be that they were later re-built or re-fronted. Other details from the photographs show elements common to 18th and early 19th century buildings. The conclusion is that Affetside is primarily an 18th century settlement.

It is now hard to find early doors and windows in the buildings in the area and the level of recent change has produced a loss of the area's traditional character. Recent changes have also involved the provision of porches and extension of properties, some changes being in scale with the existing buildings and some not. There are one or two instances where modest farm and terraced buildings have been transformed into substantial properties. The scale of alteration to properties is illustrated in the fact that only two buildings in the area are listed, the cross and Bradshaw Head.

However, in Conservation Area terms, the form, layout and building fabric of the settlement has changed little in recent years, and its setting and landscape appears to be well preserved.

2.3 Consultation Response

The letter to residents outlined the above history and character of the area and provided guidance on the implications of designation, together with links to other information sources. The meeting on the 24 January 2008 explored the relevant issues and the representative from the Holcombe Society outlined the experience of a Conservation Area from the local community's standpoint.

Fifty letters were sent to area residents and seven responses have been received. Both the letters and the discussion on the 24 January illustrated that many of the issues important to the residents were not directly Conservation Area matters. More important matters seemed to be the speed and weight of traffic, the condition of the main highway, street lighting, litter, and the collection and storage of household waste. Issues about conservation centred on concerns over additional control of the alteration to dwellings and the need for grant aid to help with the additional costs of repair. A common comment was that the proposal is 30 years to late and that it would not have any real benefit to the area. There was support for keeping the status quo. Two comments of support were made. Others considered that the Council had already made up its mind to designate the Conservation Area.

2.4 Discussion

The questions are whether the area merits designation and if designation will, in this case, add anything to protect or enhance the character of the area.

The area is of historic interest and it is important physically largely due to the unusual nature of its ribbon development. There are few notable individual buildings or building groups and many Individual buildings have been altered in terms of materials, the scale of extensions, or in detail. Many details are now not consistent with the area's traditional character. The area is comparable in terms of date and historic activity with the Holcombe Village Conservation Area. Though its buildings are less well preserved and its building groups do not offer the same level of architectural or group interest. From the consultation it appeared that there was little local appetite for the restoration of individual buildings, and therefore the prospects for improvement are limited. There is little in the way of derelict land or buildings that would benefit from the efforts that designation will bring and there are few opportunities for the enhancement of land. There is also no significant or direct threat to the area's character.

The current saved Green Belt policies from the UDP, together with other built environment and open land policies, should provide the necessary level of control over both the broad linear structure of the village and the size and design of extensions to existing buildings.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

7.1 That the area should not be designated as a Conservation Area.

List of Background Papers:-

1. Letter to residents of Affetside 10 January 2008
2. Responses from area residents by letter and e-mail.

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