

THE CONSERVATION OF BUILT HERITAGE ASSETS IN THE CITY**REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE****1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To respond to a request of the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee to provide an update on progress in respect of the work being undertaken by the Planning Service to protect and enhance the city's built heritage. This report complements a corresponding report prepared by the Executive Director of City Services that deals with the heritage work being undertaken by Culture and Tourism. Committee will note that certain subject areas are common to both reports, reflecting the cross-directorate working that is taking place.

2.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The City Council currently exercises its functions in relation to the City's heritage through the Office of the Chief Executive, via the Planning Service, and through City Services, via Culture and Tourism. This report deals with the role of the Planning Service, specifically that of the Conservation Team.
- 2.2 A report titled 'The Conservation Of Historic Assets And Their Role In Supporting Sustainable Communities' was presented to Committee in February 2011 for consideration. It described the situation regarding tangible heritage assets within the city such as scheduled monuments, listed buildings and conservation areas. It described the national planning policy context in which they are designated and subsequently regulated so as to conserve and sustain their essential value and heritage significance to the community. That report also included a summary of priorities to be addressed by the Planning Service's Conservation Team in 2011 and 2012 (the list of priorities is reproduced in Appendix 1 of this report).
- 2.3 This report brings the report of February 2011 up to date in terms of the Government's latest intentions for the planning system in the UK. The report also outlines the current position in terms of the review of the Planning Service and considers how the new structure for the service will impact upon the delivery of services in 2012 and beyond. A brief summary of the activities of the conservation Team since the February Report is also provided.

3.0 CURRENT POSITION

- 3.1 The main areas of change since the last report are listed below, beginning with changes to the structure of the planning service and followed by a description of projects completed and projects ongoing. The report also describes two new heritage sites that have been formally designated by Central Government. The report ends with a brief discussion of the Government's proposed changes to the national planning context:

3.2 Staffing Resource

- 3.2.1 At the start of 2011 the planning service establishment included 3 FTEs (full time equivalent) in the Conservation Team. Following a review of the Planning Service a new structure was agreed by Personnel Committee in October 2011. The new structure includes a heritage protection team which will have responsibilities for the protection of the built and natural environment and will be made up of 3 FTEs, including an ecologist (these duties are currently undertaken separately by the Conservation Team and Countryside Team). Whilst this new team will continue to ensure that the council delivers its statutory responsibilities for the protection of the built and natural environment this reduced resource will reduce the activities the team can undertake over and above its statutory responsibilities. In light of these changes future priorities for the team are currently being considered. Once the new structure for the Planning Service is put in place a future work programme will be agreed.

3.3 Work Programme

- 3.3.1 The ongoing work that the team is currently undertaking is considered in more detail below.

Planning Policy and Guidance Documentation

- 3.3.2 **World Heritage Site (WHS) candidature:** Submission of the Nomination Document, Management Plan and other material in support of the Wearmouth-Jarrow (W-J) Partnership's bid to UNESCO for inscription as a World Heritage Site took place in January 2011 and the visit by the UNESCO assessor took place in September 2011. The outcome of the bid should be made known in July 2012. The Conservation Team provides representation on the W-J Conservation Working Group and the Management Group and provided input to the documents that made up the Nomination File; it also inputs to the ongoing monitoring of development pressures in the WHS Buffer Zone and wider setting, making reports to the W-J Conservation Working Group and Management Group as required.

The Conservation Team is also providing input to the project to deliver the Landscape Vision for Wearmouth, ensuring that design solutions being put forward are heritage led and founded in an understanding of the site's Outstanding Universal Value.

- 3.3.3 **Wearmouth Candidate World Heritage Site Masterplan and Design Code Supplementary Planning Document:** The production of this document did not feature on the list of priorities in February as it had been envisaged that it was nearing completion. Regrettably, following the responses to the public consultation carried out additional work has been required before the document can be finalised. The revised document is currently the subject of a further round of public consultation with the intention that a final draft be reported to Cabinet in February 2012 for adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document. This unexpected and substantial piece of work has been afforded priority given that its timely completion is considered crucial in the bid for World Heritage Site inscription. As a result work on other projects has been delayed.

- 3.3.3. Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Strategies (CAMS):** Twelve of the city's fourteen conservation areas now have CAMS adopted as formal planning guidance. The conservation areas that remain to be dealt with are the two in Old Sunderland areas (the East End) which are being addressed as one exercise. Work on this has been affected by the need to prioritise the production of the Wearmouth Candidate World Heritage Supplementary Planning Document, as set out above. The CAMS is now expected to be brought forward for adoption in 2012, following public consultation. These CAMS promote understanding and appreciation of the historic areas and carry weight as formally adopted planning guidance in the exercise of the council's development control function. The council also has a statutory duty to consider other parts of the city for designation as new conservation areas; the Conservation Team is thus developing a list of areas thought to be suitable for designation as Conservation Areas. Additional CAMS will be required to be prepared to support the future designation of new conservation areas in the coming years.
- 3.3.4 Supplementary Planning Documents on Local Heritage Designations:** Work on this document has progressed but is now on hold due to priorities being given to other areas of work (as above). The value of addressing this work at this time has also been called into question as the Government has announced that extensive changes to formal advice on planning matters are to be introduced very soon (see 3.7 below) that may serve to supersede the provisions that would have appeared in this document.

Other Project Work

- 3.4.1 Townscape Heritage Initiative:** Only one heritage grant scheme is now being operated in the City, the Old Sunderland Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) that is joint funded by the Council and Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). This is currently programmed to end in June 2012, however, HLF has agreed to extend the timescales to assist in the delivery of works to the former Orphanage, Holy Trinity Church, and 49 to 50 High Street East. Work is progressing on these projects. The ending of this type of partnership funding streams will significantly curtail the Planning Service's pro-active approach to historic buildings through grant incentives.
- 3.4.2 Development Briefs for Council Owned Heritage Assets:** To facilitate the work of the council's Property Services function in the disposal of council owned heritage assets, the Conservation Team has prepared detailed development briefs for the former Fire Station in Bishopwearmouth, and Hetton House, and is in the process of preparing a development brief for Penshaw House. This work has involved the procuring and project managing of specialist consultants to carry out building appraisals and produce 'conservation statements' for Hetton House and Penshaw House; these statements being required to inform the content and guidance of the development briefs. The team has also in the last year completed development guidance for Ashburne House, at the request of and in collaboration with Sunderland University.
- 3.4.3 Restoration Works to Monuments:** In response to requests received from Area Committee or individual Councillors, the following heritage assets have been restored or are in the process of being restored in 2011/2012 through the design skills and project management provided through the Conservation Team: Roker

Park Drinking Fountain; Harraton War Memorial. Assistance is also being provided on a project to repair and restore Alice Well.

- 3.4.4 Bowes Railway Company Capital Projects:** The Conservation Team supports the Railway Company to bring forward capital projects. In 2011, this work has produced an offer of grant from English Heritage in the sum of £149,300 to assist in the restoration of the Wagon Shop, a heritage building at risk. The Council has provided £35,000 in match funding and a design team has been appointed that is currently preparing a detailed schedule of repairs to be implemented in the spring of 2012. This is being project managed by the Conservation Team. Other projects include securing Scheduled Monument Consent for works to upgrade the electrical systems of the museum site.
- 3.4.5 Heritage at Risk:** The Conservation Team endeavours to monitor the condition of the city's various heritage assets and where there is evidence that such buildings are 'at risk', for example those included on English Heritage's 'Heritage at Risk' register, measures are taken where possible and resources allow to address the cause of the problem. Measures are being explored that will address the currently poor condition of two buildings on the Heritage at Risk register (in addition to Bowes Railing as described above) i.e. the Acoustic Mirror in Fulwell and Doxford House, Silksworth. Other assets at risk are also being addressed as described in 3.4.1 and 3.4.4 above.
- 3.4.6 Management of Consultants on Research Projects:** At the request of Area Committees, assistance is being provided by the Conservation Team to appoint heritage specialists to carry out research or bring forward projects. Work is currently progressing to develop 'Village Atlases' for Old Penshaw Village and Old Hetton. The Conservation Team will soon be procuring specialist consultants to carry out the Village Atlas for Old Penshaw, and will be providing assistance to Limestone Landscapes in 2012 with regard to Hetton. It is envisaged that this work will, amongst other benefits, provide the research and baseline information to identify areas that would be suitable for conservation area declarations in the future and inform the production of suitable Character Appraisals and Management Strategies for their preservation and enhancement.

3.5 Heritage Assets Added or Lost:

- 3.5.1** Defended settlement on the summit of Humbledon Hill: Under the provisions of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (As Amended), the Minister for Tourism and Heritage has decided to add the summit of Humbledon Hill to the Schedule of Ancient Monuments. The settlement is an early palisaded enclosure that incorporated the remains of at least two Bronze Age round barrows; although there are numerous examples of hillforts and defended settlements in the upland areas of North East England, examples on the coastal plain are rare.
- 3.5.2** St Nicholas's Church – Listed Grade II: Under the provisions of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the Minister for Tourism and Heritage Built has decided to add the above building to the List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, effective from 29 October 2011. Built in 1939, it is considered an attractive inter-war church by the respected architect

Donald McIntyre. Most notably, it houses the largest collection in the country of Leonard Evett's stained glass work.

3.6 National Planning Context

- 3.6.1 The former Government's 2010 Statement on the Historic Environment and its Planning Policy Statement No 5, 'Planning for the Historic Environment' (2010) are soon to be repealed. The Government has announced its intention to replace all of the current planning policy guidance with a single document, the central message of which is that development means growth and that sustainable development should go ahead without delay. The draft NPPF states that "the Government's objective is that the historic environment and its heritage assets should be conserved and enjoyed for the quality of life they bring to this and future generations".

4.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The prime role of the Conservation Team is to provide input to the council's development management role as local planning authority, mainly through the determination of applications for planning permission, listed building consent and conservation area consent. Other statutory duties include the preparation of character appraisals and management strategies for the city's conservation areas and, from time to time, considering whether other areas of the city warrant conservation area status.
- 4.2 Although the team now has reduced resources efforts will be made to bring existing project work to a satisfactory conclusion. As set out above future work programme priorities will be agreed once the new Planning Service structure is in place. It is envisaged that the Conservation Team will focus on its statutory duties described in 4.1 above, additional priorities over and above the statutory functions will be agreed as part of the future work programming process.

5. RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 That the Scrutiny Committee note and comments on the information provided.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- § Adopted City of Sunderland Unitary Development Plan
- § The Government's Statement on the Historic Environment for England 2010 (DCMS - March 2010)
- § Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS5) 'Planning and the Historic Environment'
- § PPS5 Planning for the Historic Environment: Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide (DCLG, DCMS, English Heritage - March 2010)
- § National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Draft for Consultation 2011

APPENDIX 1.
Extract from February 2011 Report
Priorities for 2011 and 2012

- 7.1 The following priorities are proposed to be addressed by the Conservation Team in 2011 and 2012:
- 1 Support the Council's Development Management Function;
 - 2 Contribute to the City's Local Development Framework Core Strategy and Supplementary Planning Documents on Heritage Designations (see 5.4);
 - 3 Support the Wearmouth-Jarrow World Heritage Site candidature and subsequent responsibilities;
 - 4 Progress to adoption the Old Sunderland Conservation Area appraisal and Management Strategy
 - 5 Progress to completion the Old Sunderland THI grant scheme;
 - 6 Continue to support the development of Bowes Railway Museum;
 - 7 Liaise with the County Archaeologist in the development of the Historic Environment Record for the City.
 - 8 Liaise with English Heritage in the monitoring of Heritage at Risk.
 - 9 Initiate the identification and declaration of new conservation areas and preparation of associated CAMS;
 - 10 Initiate a List of locally significant heritage assets for the City, subject to relevant government guidance being put in place and additional resources being identified.
- 7.2 Meeting all of these priorities in 2011 and 2012 will be dependant upon a number of factors, and in particular, resource availability. The timescale for item 2 will be dependant upon the review of the Planning and Environment Service and changes to the development plan system signalled by government in the Localism Bill. Items 9 and 10 are likely to be brought forward over a longer period of time. Potential work on the Local List is being deferred pending the publication of new guidance by English Heritage expected in summer 2011.