

## **PLANNING AND HIGHWAYS COMMITTEE – 11 DECEMBER 2008**

### **WASHINGTON VILLAGE CONSERVATION AREA: CHARACTER APPRAISAL & MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**

#### **REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION**

##### **1.0 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To seek the comments of this Committee on the 'Washington Village Conservation Area Character Appraisal & Management Strategy', prior to its presentation to Cabinet to: -
- report on the outcome of consultations on the draft version of the Character Appraisal and Management Strategy;
  - adopt the revised document as Formal Planning Guidance;

##### **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (LB&CA) Act 1990 defines Conservation Areas as "areas of special architectural and historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve and enhance". The Act stipulates that Local Authorities are under a duty to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of their conservation areas.
- 2.2 The Council also has an obligation under the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) Policy B4 to produce supplementary guidance in the form of character appraisals for conservation areas in the City. This reflects national planning guidance in Planning Policy Guidance Note (PPG) 15 'Planning and the Historic Environment' which encourages Local Authorities to prepare detailed assessments of the special interest, character and appearance of their conservation areas. Such documents may also contain proposals for preserving and enhancing the character of a conservation area.
- 2.3 The Council's performance in preparing up-to-date character appraisals for its conservation areas is currently the subject of the heritage "Best Value Performance Indicator" (BV219). The purpose of BV219 is to monitor local authorities' performance in relation to Sections 71 and 72 of the above Act.
- 2.4 The Washington Village Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Strategy is the seventh in a series of such studies that will address all fourteen of the City's conservation areas. It fulfils the Council's duties and obligations under the Planning (LB & CA) Act 1990. It will also help to satisfy the above BVPI target for 2008/09.

### **3.0 Current Position**

- 3.1 Washington Village Conservation Area is focussed upon the historic village of Washington. At the heart of the village is the green, a focal point at the crossroads of key historic routes through Washington and the former location of a medieval two-row settlement. Buildings of particular note in Washington Village include Washington Old Hall (seat of the Washington family of which George Washington was a descendent), Dame Margaret Hall and Holy Trinity Church. As with other conservation areas in the city, the integrity and character of the area is coming under increasing pressure from householder and commercial property alterations. The Council's planning powers allow it to exercise tight controls over works to Listed Buildings, however, its powers to conserve unlisted buildings and other features in the Conservation Area are limited.
- 3.2 A Character Appraisal and Management Strategy (CAMS), adopted as formal Planning Guidance, would strengthen the Council's policies for the Conservation Area and help to protect its best features, including historic buildings, significant green spaces and mature trees, from the potentially adverse effects of property alteration and new development.
- 3.3 The draft Washington Village CAMS follows the relevant guidance set out in the joint Office for the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) / English Heritage publications 'Guidance on conservation area appraisals' and 'Guidance on the management of conservation areas' (2006). Part 1 of the document, the 'Character Appraisal', identifies and appraises the characteristics and features that give the Conservation Area its special interest. Part 2, the 'Management Strategy', addresses in detail the issues raised in the Character Appraisal by establishing objectives and proposals to secure the future preservation and enhancement of the Conservation Area's special character.
- 3.4 The draft document has now been subject to public consultation. A range of organisations and interested parties have been consulted, including English Heritage, national and local heritage societies, local residents and businesses, local architects and Ward Councillors. Copies of the Study were available for viewing at the Civic Centre, Washington Green Library and the City Library. A public exhibition was also held at Washington Old Hall to discuss the Management Proposals.
- 3.5 The period of consultation expired on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2008 and the Character Appraisal and Management Strategy has now been modified in light of the representations received. A summary of the responses and modifications is given below.

### **4.0 Summary of Consultation Responses and Modifications**

- 4.1 In all, 4 written representations have been received out of a total of over 280 consultation letters sent. 12 people attended the public exhibition, of which none completed comments sheets, but notes were taken covering the main issues raised in the discussions. Three responses were received from local residents and one from English Heritage.

- 4.2 Various additions and amendments to the document's text and images have been made in light of the comments received (see appended schedule).
- 4.3 There was largely a high degree of support for the document from residents, who expressed much interest in and concern for the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
- 4.4 The schedule attached to this report summarises the responses received and, where appropriate, the corresponding modifications made to the document. A summary list of external consultees is also appended. Copies of the final (revised) version of the Washington Village Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Strategy are available in the Members' library.

## **5. Recommendation**

- 5.1 The Committee is invited to make comments on the Washington Village Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Strategy.

## **6. Background Papers**

- Adopted City of Sunderland Unitary Development Plan.
- Planning Policy Guidance Note (PPG) 15 'Planning and the Historic Environment'.
- ODPM / English Heritage publication 'Guidance on conservation area appraisals'.
- ODPM / English Heritage publication 'Guidance on the management of conservation areas'.
- Draft Washington Village Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Strategy.
- Responses to public consultation.

## Appendix 1: Schedule of Consultation Responses and Action Taken – Washington Village Conservation Area Character Appraisal & Management Strategy

Consultee	Comments	Action / reason for no action
<i>Heritage Organisations</i>		
English Heritage	No specific comment.	None required.
<i>Architects</i>		
None		
<i>Local Businesses / Residents</i>		
Local resident 1 <i>Written representation</i>	Congratulations on well thought-out document, fully support direction and intention of document.	None required.
Local resident 2 <i>Written representation</i>	Expressed concern that installing timber sashes is prohibitively more expensive than installing uPVC.  Expressed concern that motorcyclists use the subway at the northern end of the CA and cause danger and nuisance.  Expressed concern over the poor state of the highway at Valley Forge, identified as a gateway to the CA.  Raised issue of littering in the CA.	No action, document actually refers to cost of upgrading existing timber sashes rather than installing new.  Outside the scope of this document – to be referred to Transportation and Engineering.  Outside the scope of this document – to be referred to Transportation and Engineering.  Outside the scope of this document – to be referred to Community and Cultural Services.
Local resident 3 <i>Discussion at public exhibition</i>	Provided additional information on the dates of a number of the oldest properties in the village.  Noted that the Highwayman and the Witch are local legends and have no basis in fact.	Map on page 10 “Year of Development” and text on page 7 amended.  Text on page 9 “Local characters” amended to clarify that the characters/stories are legendary and probably not historically accurate.
Local resident 4 <i>Discussion at public exhibition</i>	Noted that the Lodge at Washington Old Hall should be marked as Listed separately from the Old Hall, and is of a similar age to the Old Hall.	Maps on page 3 “Location and Features” and page 10 “Year of Development” amended.
Local resident 5 <i>Discussion at public exhibition</i>	Provided additional information about the age and history of Chantry House	Map on page 10 “Year of Development” and text on page 23 amended.
Local resident 6 <i>Discussion at public exhibition</i>	Expressed concern that grass cuttings aren’t collected and taken away by the Council when the grass is cut in the village: noted that the Northumbria in Bloom judges have commented negatively about this in the past.  Queried whether two redundant bus stops can be removed from The Avenue.	Outside the scope of this document – issue to be referred to Community and Cultural Services.  Outside the scope of this document – but to be referred to Transportation and Engineering.
Local resident 7 <i>Discussion at public exhibition</i>	Expressed concern that the Churchyard (Holy Trinity) is not well-maintained and appears overgrown and neglected.	Outside the scope of this document – issue to be referred to Community and Cultural Services and the Church to establish responsibility for maintenance of this land.

	Expressed concern that the conifers on the Green, immediately adjacent to Glebe Crescent, are a potential risk to highway traffic.	Outside the scope of this document – issue to be referred to Aboricultural Officer for investigation.
Local resident 8 <i>Written representation</i>	Requested that the area between Chantry House and Liberty Green be identified as Significant Open Space, also noting that the boundary wall of historical interest.  Noted that cottage to the Old Hall is roughly contemporary to the Hall.	The area in question is already identified as Significant Open Space on page 3 of the document, therefore no action required.  Maps on page 3 “Location and Features” and page 10 “Year of Development” amended.

## Appendix 2 – List of external consultees

<b>National Organisations / local amenity groups</b>	<b>Architects</b>	<b>Residents / businesses</b>
English Heritage	Frank E. Hodgson	All owners and occupiers in the Conservation Area.
Victorian Society	John D. Waugh	
The Georgian Group	Gerard McCormack	
Twentieth Century Society	Jane Darbyshire & David Kendal	
Institute of Historic Building Conservation	William D. Kirtley	
Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings	Mario Minchella Architects	
Department for Culture, Media and Sport	Napper Architects	
Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment	Red Box Design Group	
The Theatres Trust	Anthony Watson Chartered Architect	
Sunderland Civic Society	David Ash Partnership	
Sunderland Antiquarian Society	A.M. Watt	
Sunderland Heritage & Local History Forum	Jeff Park Building Consultancy Services	
Sunderland Old Township Heritage Society	Wearmouth Architectural Design	
North of England Civic Trust	Gray, Fawdon & Riddle Architects	
Friends of Washington Old Hall	Howarth Litchfield	
Washington Local History Society	Fitz Architects	
Living History North East	HLB Architects	
Grace McCombie, Buildings Historian	Planit Design	