

THE CONSERVATION OF HISTORIC ASSETS AND THEIR ROLE IN SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1.0 Why has the report come to the Committee?

1.1 To respond to a request of the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee on the above issue to assist in committee's evidence gathering exercise, concentrating on those aspects that fall within the scope of the Council's Planning and Environment Service.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 This report presents the situation regarding tangible heritage assets within the City such as scheduled monuments, listed buildings and conservation areas. It briefly describes the national planning policy context in which they are designated and subsequently regulated in terms of managing proposed development or other changes so as to conserve and sustain their essential value and heritage significance to the community. The report draws attention to the Council's document, the 'State of the Historic Environment Report' that provides a ready reference to formally designated heritage assets in the City; and also recognises heritage assets that are not formally designated.

2.2 The management of physical heritage assets takes place within a legislative framework set by Government and for the most part, is operated under the provisions of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. In the Spring of 2010, the Government issued a number of documents which have changed national planning policy; these documents are the Government's Statement on the Historic Environment; Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment; and the associated guidance notes issued by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and English Heritage. These are briefly described below with internet links to the documents for ease of reference. The manner in which these documents are being incorporated into the City Council's own Local Development Framework is then explained, as well as the manner in which this relates to the Council's Strategic Priorities that disseminate from the Sunderland Strategy.

2.3 Accordingly this report will demonstrate how the conservation of the City's heritage assets plays a key role in supporting the Government's and the Council's wider social, environmental and economic objectives in respect of furthering the development of sustainable communities.

3.0 Heritage Assets in the City

- 3.1 Scrutiny Committee received a report in March 2010 that described and monitored the formally designated heritage assets situated in the City. This document, the 'State of the Historic Environment Report' was first produced in April 2007. The 3rd edition of the Council's report is available online at www.sunderland.gov.uk/conservation though it will soon be superseded by the 4th edition, which is in preparation and will take account of the new planning policy context (see above).
- 3.2 To summarise the document, it reports that the City has nine scheduled monuments, 692 listed buildings (of which nine are grade I and 16 Grade II*), there are fourteen conservation areas and two historic parks on English Heritage's Register of Historic Parks and Gardens.
- 3.3 The main areas of change since the last report was issued are listed below:
- 3.3.1 *World Heritage Site candidature*: submission of the Nomination Document, Management Plan and other material in support of the Wearmouth-Jarrow Partnership's bid to UNESCO for inscription as a World Heritage Site took place in January 2011.
 - 3.3.2 *Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Strategies (CAMS)*: twelve of the fourteen conservation areas in the City now have appraisals and strategies 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 that is to be brought forward for adoption in 2011 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.
 - 3.3.3 *Schemes of financial assistance*: The grant scheme operating in Sunnyside that has been funded through the Council, Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and One North-East, finished in June 2010. A summary of the outputs achieved is provided at Appendix 1 of this report. Only one grant scheme is now being operated, the Old Sunderland Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) that is funded by the Council and HLF. This is currently programmed to be terminated in June 2011. The ending of this type of partnership funding streams will significantly curtail the Planning and Environment Service's pro-active approach to historic buildings in terms of promoting the restoration of buildings through grant incentives.
 - 3.3.4 *St Nicholas' Church , Hetton le Hole*: this Grade II Listed Church has been de-listed by English Heritage following a highly damaging arson attack; the building is now ruinous and without any form of protection.

3.4 Specialist advice relating to the built heritage of the City is largely provided by Planning and Environment's Conservation Team which currently consists of two permanent staff and the temporary post of THI project officer (due to be terminated in June 2011). The role of the Team is primarily to contribute input to the Council's Development Management Section in discharging its duties as a 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. This work is assisted by the County Archaeologist's office that provides specialist information on the County's archaeological deposits and maintains the County's Historic Environment Record on behalf of the five districts of Tyne and Wear, which is also a statutory duty under the provisions of PPS5.

4.0 National Planning Policy Context and Providing for sustainable development

4.1 The Government's 2010 Statement on the Historic Environment states that *'Investing in heritage makes good sense. The historic environment includes some of our most important cultural artefacts which offer economic, environmental, social and personal benefits and can play a significant role in providing for sustainable development.'* In its Planning Policy Statement No 5, the Government goes on to state that it considers the planning function of local authorities to be key in supporting *'... the Government's wider social, environmental and economic objectives and for sustainable communities.'* (PPS5).

4.2 Clearly, the act of conserving historic assets is inherently sustainable. Preserving buildings and, where appropriate, adapting them to a new use, will achieve the continued utility of the embedded energy that is in their substance, removing the need for replacement buildings that require new materials to be excavated, manufactured, delivered to site, and installed - a major investment in energy and resources.

4.3 Recent analysis supports the above assertion that the conservation of existing buildings has such a low carbon footprint that its benefits will never be outweighed by new buildings purporting to be more energy efficient. For instance, DEFRA in 2004, reported to the Government that 24% of all waste is generated by demolitions and construction. The Crichton Carbon Centre in a report to Historic Scotland in 2007 concluded that *'In terms of building replacement, even when compared to traditional buildings with very poor thermal performance, investing in a replacement building, even a very highly efficient building, is unlikely to recoup the investment over the (100 year) life of the building.'*

The report concluded that ‘Traditional buildings that are well insulated and with efficient heating and lighting systems have the potential to out perform new buildings over the life of the building (100 years) when total embodied energy is included in the equation ... in terms of cost returns on investment, the traditional building refurbishment option has significant cost benefits over the life of the new build, regardless of the energy performance level.’

4.4 From a community point of view, historic buildings and areas provide a stable and familiar townscape that creates a distinctive sense of place and belonging that is of both tangible and intangible value to its community and frequently a source of great civic pride. The Government’s vision, as expressed in its 2010 statement is *‘That the value of the historic environment is recognised by all who have the power to shape it; that Government gives it proper recognition and that it is managed intelligently and in a way that fully realises its contribution to the economic, social and cultural life of the nation.’*

4.5 English Heritage’s ‘Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance’ document (2008) notes that many historic settlements and neighbourhoods provide a model of sustainable development and that there are *‘cultural and heritage values in the historic environment that people want to enjoy and sustain for the benefit of future generations’*.

4.6 The full text of the Government’s recent publications relating to the historic environment may be seen on the following web sites:

- Government’s Statement on the Historic Environment; http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference_library/publications/6763.aspx
- Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment; <http://www.communities/documents/planningandbuildings/pps5>
- Guidance notes issued by DCMS and English Heritage: <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/pps-practice-guide/pps5practiceguide.pdf>

5.0 Contribution of Conservation of City’s Heritage Assets to the delivery of the Council’s Strategic Priorities

5.1 The Sunderland Strategy – the City’s sustainable community strategy – identifies within one of its five strategic aims the importance of protecting and nurturing the City’s built heritage in helping to create a strong culture of sustainability. The Council’s Strategic Priority for an ‘Attractive and Inclusive City’ and its cross-cutting priority of Sustainability recognise the opportunities the City’s rich built heritage presents and the contribution its preservation and enhancement can make to achieving its priorities.

5.2 The Council's Strategic Outcomes for delivering its priorities include 'promoting quality physical environments' and 'building and sustaining a sense of community'. Conserving the City's heritage assets inherently has a role to play in delivering these outcomes and providing tangible linkages between them. For instance, the designation of new Conservation Areas and the production of Character Appraisals for existing Conservation Areas promotes the quality of the City's local historic environment and raises awareness and appreciation among people of the significance of the areas they live and work, helping towards building and sustaining a strong sense of place and community in the City's villages and neighbourhoods. Likewise, regenerating historic areas such as Sunnyside through conservation-led grant schemes has secured the future of many historic buildings, has physically improved the quality of the environment, positively changed perceptions of the area, and in turn helped to build and sustain a vibrant mixed use community at the heart of the City Centre.

6.0 Sustaining the City's historic environment through the Development Planning process.

6.1 The Council discharges its duties as a local planning authority primarily through its development management function. It regulates development in accord with government policy, but also having regard to locally generated planning policy.

6.2 The Council is now moving towards developing its Local Development Framework (LDF). The overarching strategic document will be the Core Strategy. Presently, a revised Preferred Options Draft is in preparation. The policies of the Council's adopted Unitary Development Plan remain in force until superseded through the adoption of the full suite of LDF documents. For the present time, there are 14 saved policies set out in the City's Unitary Development Plan (1998) that provides detailed policy guidance on developments affecting all aspects of the historic environment. One broad strategic policy is also set out within the Regional Spatial Strategy (2008).

6.3 A key feature of the LDF, is that it cannot repeat national or regional policy. In considering development proposals, it must therefore take into account the full range of policies from the national (PPS5 in this instance) to the local level. Accordingly, the emerging Core Strategy will contain a more limited suite of policies for governing the City's heritage assets.

6.4 The principal policy within the emerging Core Strategy dealing with the conservation of the City's heritage assets is Policy CS2 Sustainable Communities, '... ensuring that Sunderland will become a more sustainable City'. Within CS2 there is to be a number of criteria aimed at promoting heritage and culture; and preserving and enhancing the historic environment for their cultural,

regeneration and tourism potential (see policy CS2.4).). This is to be supplemented by more locally distinctive policies particularly in relation to the protecting the integrity of the candidate World Heritage Site (at policies CS6.4 and CS8.4).

- 6.5 Having established in the Core Strategy the over-arching policy relating to heritage protection and its role in creating a sustainable City, it would allow for other more detailed LDF documents to be brought forward. It is presently proposed to produce a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) that will concentrate on the theme of the City's heritage designations, both current and future. An SPD cannot in its own right create policy. It can instead, provide further amplification to the specific LDF policy by setting out more detailed guidance as to how that policy can be implemented. In terms of decision making on planning applications, the starting point will always be policy, however, the content of the SPD can be afforded "significant weight" in the process.
- 6.6 This particular SPD is to be drafted by the Planning Service's Conservation Team having regard to statute (as in section 3 above), the Core Strategy and also the Council's Strategic Priorities and locally derived policies and priorities as described in the City's five Area Committees' Local Area Plans. It is envisaged that the SPD will establish a policy basis and methodology for the Council's approach to, amongst other issues, the following matters:
- Conservation Area Character Appraisals and Management Strategies;
 - Identification and declaration of new conservation areas;
 - Establishing a Local List of locally significant heritage assets and a policy for their future conservation;
 - Procedures for establishing Article Four Directions;
 - Code of Practice for sites of local archaeological significance;
 - Addressing the issue of the City's Heritage at Risk;
 - Code of Practice for the City's Blue Plaques.

7.0 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.
- 7.3 These priorities are not just important for discharging the Council's statutory obligations and policies in relation to the City's historic environment, but also for their role in promoting, increasing awareness and appreciation of the quality of the City's heritage assets and the contribution their conservation makes to delivering the Council's Strategic Priorities (with particular regard to the Strategic Outcomes described in paragraph 5.2). The conservation of the City's heritage assets is therefore a cross cutting theme that supports and runs throughout the Council's key policies and priorities for creating sustainable communities.
- 7.4 Members should note that the coalition government's Localism Bill has recently been issued and has far reaching implications for the planning processes in the UK. The detail of how the Bill will be put into effect is quite thin and its impact upon the historic environment and issues of sustainability is by no means clear; however, concerns are already being expressed that proposals for Neighbourhood Development Orders, as currently drafted, may well serve to undermine the presumption in favour of preservation and enhancement of heritage assets that is explicitly stated in current statute.
- 7.5 Members are invited to make comment on the above report and officers will endeavour to answer any questions arising.

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)
- ODPM / English Heritage publication 'Guidance on conservation area appraisals'
- ODPM/ English Heritage publication 'Guidance on the management of conservation areas'

Appendix 1: Progress on Character Appraisal and Management Strategy (CAMS) – January 2011

Conservation Area	Designation Statement	In preparation	First draft consultation	Final draft consultation	Formally adopted Planning Guidance	Date adopted
1. Sunnyside	●	●	●	●	●	October 2009
2. Old Sunderland	●	●				
3. Bishopwearmouth	●	●	●	●	●	March 2007
4. Ashbrooke (SPG)	●	●	●	●	●	January 2005
5. Silksworth Hall	●	●	●	●	●	January 2010
6. Whitburn Bents	●	●	●	●	●	December 2007
7. The Green, Ryhope	●	●	●	●	●	December 2010
8. St. Michael's (Houghton)	●	●	●	●	●	December 2007
9. Nesham Place (Houghton)	●	●	●	●	●	December 2007
10. Washington Village	●	●	●	●	●	January 2009
11. Newbottle Village	●	●	●	●	●	March 2009
12. Old Sunderland Riverside	●	●				
13. Roker Park	●	●	●	●	●	February 2007
14. The Cedars	●	●	●	●	●	February 2008
Total	14	14	12	12	12	

APPENDIX 2

OUTPUTS FROM RECENT GRANT SCHEMES OPERATED IN SUNNISIDE 2001 TO 2010

Sunniside Townscape Heritage Initiative.

(A partnership between the City Council and Heritage Lottery Fund)

Buildings Improved	32
Commercial Floorspace Improved (sq m)	8,815
Commercial Floorspace Created (sq m)	120
Residences Created	81
Jobs Created	41
Jobs Safeguarded	78

Sunniside Commercial Property Grant Scheme

(A partnership between the City Council and Sunniside Partnership funded by ONE North-East)

Buildings Improved	36
Commercial Floorspace Improved (sq m)	4,897
Commercial Floorspace Created (sq m)	1091
Residences Created	0
Jobs Created	104.5
Jobs Safeguarded	41

Cumulative Totals of above

Buildings Improved	68
Commercial Floorspace Improved (sq m)	13,997
Commercial Floorspace Created (sq m)	1211
Residences Created	81
Jobs Created	145.5
Jobs Safeguarded	119