

REPORT OF HEAD OF PLANNING AND REGENERATION**BISHOPWEARMOUTH CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN****1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members on the revised Bishopwearmouth Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan (CAMP). This document will replace the 2007 Bishopwearmouth Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Strategy (CAMS) which is currently adopted planning guidance and is due to be considered for re-adoption by Cabinet on 20th June 2018.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Council has a statutory duty under s69(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to designate any areas which it considers to be of special architectural or historic interest as conservation areas, and to review these from time to time. The Council has a further duty under s71(1) of the 1990 Act to formulate and prepare proposals for the preservation and enhancement of those areas. The review and re-adoption of the Bishopwearmouth CAMP would fulfil these statutory obligations. In addition, saved policy B4 of the Unitary Development Plan states that the Council will issue planning guidance for conservation areas from time to time.
- 2.2 The Council submitted a funding application for the Bishopwearmouth Townscape Heritage Scheme to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) in August 2016, and was awarded a first round pass in February 2017. The first round award letter in February 2017 stipulated that the existing 2007 Bishopwearmouth Conservation Area CAMS was to be updated in order to secure final approval of the HLF grant. The Council's second round funding application was submitted on 28th February 2018, with the HLF decision expected on 26th June 2018. Adoption of the completed CAMP document as formal planning guidance is expected by the Heritage Lottery Fund before they will grant permission to start operating the Townscape Heritage Scheme.

3. Current Position

- 3.1 The Bishopwearmouth Conservation Area was designated in 1969 and centred upon the core of the medieval village. This was then extended in 1989 to include the surrounding 19th and early 20th century development in recognition of the varied architectural and historic interest. The designated boundary includes a range of high quality Victorian and Edwardian buildings such as the Empire Theatre, and the Dun Cow and Peacock public houses, as well as the historic core of the medieval settlement around Sunderland Minster and Town Park.
- 3.2 A conservation area character appraisal is an evidence based document that investigates, evaluates and records the unique significance of the area by assessing the diverse individual architectural and historic features that contribute to its overall special character. It also considers whether the designated boundary remains relevant. The review process increases our understanding of the conservation area, guiding proposals for future management of change and aiding consistent decision making. This is developed further as a series of management objectives within the conservation area management plan section which is intended to be a proactive tool to guide the future evolution of the heritage asset. The appraisal and management plan process has been undertaken with reference to the Historic England Advice Note 1: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management (2016).
- 3.3 The Council was required to produce the updated Bishopwearmouth CAMP as part of our second round submission to the Heritage Lottery Fund, to support the direction and delivery of the Townscape Heritage Scheme from 2018 until 2023. The third section of the Bishopwearmouth CAMP contains the Management and Maintenance Plan and is a requirement of the Heritage Lottery Fund. This explains the Council intentions for and commitment to sustaining the legacy of the Council's and Heritage Lottery Fund's investment in the conservation area.

The revised Conservation Area Management Plan document is attached as Appendix A

4. Public Consultation

- 4.1 A six week consultation period on the draft document commenced on 19th March 2018, ending on 27th April and included a public meeting at Sunderland Minster on 9th April to explain the content and management proposals, and gain public support for the overall Townscape Heritage objectives. A range of organisations and interested parties were consulted as

part of this process including ward Councillors, Historic England, local heritage groups, residents and businesses. The consultation was promoted on the Council's website and social media platforms, was featured on BBC Radio Newcastle and in the Sunderland Echo newspaper, and consultation letters were sent to every property within the conservation boundary.

- 4.2 Feedback from the consultation was very positive with support noted for the detailed management plan document, the Town Park Improvement Scheme proposals and the Townscape Heritage Scheme bid. The consultation event was attended by 20 local residents and business operators. Supportive emails were received from Ward Councillors Kay and Scanlan, a formal acknowledgment was received from Historic England, and 15 local residents completed feedback forms and online questionnaires and registered for future updates. Unanimous support was expressed for the CAMP document, and the proposed amendments to the designated boundary of the conservation area, with various suggestions made regarding the future use and appearance of Town Park.
- 4.3 Detailed written comments were received from the Sunderland Civic Society suggesting minor text amendments to improve the document, querying the detail of the management proposals and seeking clarification on various planning policy and development control issues. A full response has been sent addressing their comments.

All comments received during the consultation period have been summarised within Appendix B.

5. Proposed Boundary Amendments

- 5.1 The current conservation area boundary was last reviewed in 1989 and the area has undergone significant physical change within the intervening decades, most notably around Keel Square with substantial changes to the highway network and the public realm. These works have been undertaken to a high standard with a marked improvement in the setting of the adjacent listed buildings as well as the general appearance. The contribution this new landscaped area makes to the sense of arrival to the historic conservation area and framing of the surrounding historic buildings is considered worthy of inclusion within the designated boundary. It is therefore proposed that the designated boundary be formally amended to include Keel Square.
- 5.2 The current conservation area boundary includes only part of landscaped area to the west of Weardale House between Paley Street and St Michaels Way. The boundary here does not represent any defined borders to the planting or pathways, and is not indicative of any former features or layout

shown on historic mapping. It is therefore proposed that the boundary edge be simplified here to end at the pavement edge on the east side of Paley Street and then meeting High Street West on the corner of the Victoria Buildings retaining the pavement around the Revolution PH within the designated boundary.

The proposed amended designation map is attached as Appendix C.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 The production of the updated Bishopwearmouth Conservation Area CAMP fulfils the Council's statutory obligation under s71(1) of the 1990 Act and our planning policy commitment within saved policy B4 of the Unitary Development Plan. In addition the updated document is a compulsory grant condition for our second round application to the Heritage Lottery Fund to operate the Bishopwearmouth Townscape Heritage Scheme.
- 6.2 The proposed amendments to the designated conservation area boundary are a result of a detailed review process required by s69(1) of the 1990 Act, and would reflect the current physical layout and recent changes in the appearance of the conservation area.

7. Recommendations

- 7.1 The Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider and comment.

8 Background Papers

Appendix A: Bishopwearmouth Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan

Appendix B: Summary of consultation responses received

Appendix C: Proposed revised boundary of the designated conservation area

Appendix D: Equality Analysis