
VICTORIA EMBANKMENT CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL

**Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor David Lyonette,
Regeneration and Planning Portfolio**

Responsible Director - John Buxton, Director of Development and Environment

Purpose of Report

1. To seek Members' approval of the **appended** finalised Victoria Embankment Conservation Area Character Appraisal.

Information and Analysis

2. Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 emphasises the need for the local development plan to include firm conservation area policies, based on a clear definition of the special architectural or historic interest that warranted designation. PPG15 Planning and the Historic Environment stresses the need for local planning authorities to make an assessment of the special interest, character and appearance of all conservation areas in their districts.
3. The Environment Scrutiny Review Action Plan adopted by the Cabinet highlighted the need for Conservation Area Character Appraisals to be undertaken.
4. Victoria Embankment is the fourth in a programme of 16 Conservation Area Character Appraisals to be undertaken over the next few years. In addition, new Best Value Performance Indicators have been introduced which measure how many conservation area Character Appraisals have been carried out in the last five years.
5. Character Appraisals for conservation areas are seen as a tool to assist in the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas. Through the character appraisals, areas (or buildings) of special landscape or historic/architectural character can be highlighted as possessing particular interest, and being worthy of preservation and enhancement. Features of special interest, such as historic walls, stiles, open spaces, trees or historic surfaces; ie, cobbles, Yorkshire flags or setts, can be particularly highlighted through the character appraisal, which can then be included in future Supplementary Planning Guidance. The appraisal provides a sound basis, defensible on appeal, for the development plan policies and future development control decisions.

Results of Consultation Process

6. At the meeting of 30 August 2005, Cabinet approved the Draft Piercebridge Conservation Area Character Appraisal as the basis for consultation and agreed future character appraisals could pass to the Director of Development and Environment for approval prior to public consultation followed by final Cabinet approval.
 7. Consultation on the document was carried out for 6 weeks between 17 January and 21 February 2007 and included letter drops to inhabitants within the Victoria Embankment conservation area, a two-day exhibition in the Town Hall reception area and a press release in the local press. 10 comments forms were returned by residents, plus 2 emailed responses and 4 letters, including one from the Environment Agency confirming its statutory responsibilities. Observations and recommendations within the scope of the appraisal suggested the following (most of which were highlighted in the appraisal document):-
 - (a) The restoration and/or repainting of the 19thC cast iron bollards and riverside chains.
 - (b) *The restoration and/or replacement of the stone plinths upon which the bollards rest, many of which have been displaced and/or removed.
 - (c) Lighting columns in a traditional Victorian style.
 - (d) Reinstatement of the original cast iron front elevation boundary railings to properties along Victoria Embankment.
 - (e) Flower planting schemes along the riverbank.
 - (f) *Restoration of Polam Lane bridge (now Grade II listed), followed by removal of all boarding and scaffolding.
 - (g) CCTV cameras to deter vandalism and theft from parked cars, which appears to be a significant problem.
- *Points (b) and (f) are proposals recommended within the Draft Character Appraisal.
8. A number of occupants' comments forms discussed issues outside the scope of this document, relating to Highways and/or Environment Agency responsibilities. Copies of the comments forms have been passed on to the Highways section and the Environment Agency to respond directly.

Conclusion

9. The attached Victoria Embankment Conservation Area Character Appraisal is the fourth in a series of appraisals concerning the 16 conservation areas in the Borough. The final document has been amended to take account of comments made during the consultation process and will provide a useful tool in assisting the conservation and enhancement of the Victoria Embankment conservation area.

Legal Implications

10. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

11. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. Officers have considered the appraisal in the context of Policy E45 of the Borough of Darlington Local Plan and section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. Local residents have commented that improved lighting in Victorian-style lamp posts and CCTV camera coverage would reduce vandalism to, and theft from, cars parked in Victoria Embankment and around the entrance to South Park.

Council Policy Framework

12. The issues contained within this report do not represent change to Council policy or the Council's policy framework.

Decision Deadline

13. For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter.

Recommendation

14. It is recommended that Cabinet approve the attached Victoria Embankment Conservation Area Character Appraisal.

Reasons

15. The recommendations are supported to provide a document to assist in the protection and management of the Victoria Embankment Conservation Area.

John Buxton
Director of Development and Environment

Background Papers

File of comments received.

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