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**PIERCEBRIDGE CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL**

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

**Responsible Director - John Buxton, Director of Development and Environment**

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**Purpose of Report**

1. To seek Members' approval of the **appended** finalised Piercebridge 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. Piercebridge is the first 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.

**Outcome of Consultation**

6. At the meeting of 30 August 2005, Cabinet approved the Draft Piercebridge Conservation Area Character Appraisal as the basis for consultation. Consultation on the document was carried out for 6 weeks between 16 November 2005 and 28 December 2005 and included letter drops to inhabitants of Piercebridge, a two-day exhibition in the Town Hall
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reception and a press release in the local press. Nine comments forms were returned by residents; two residents were in favour of the character appraisal, six others either had no comments to make, or raised issues outside the scope of the document, and one response was received from Durham County Archaeology stressing the need to further emphasise the importance of Piercebridge's archaeological history. Extra paragraphs were added to the section in question as recommended.

### **Conclusion**

7. The attached Piercebridge Conservation Areas Character Appraisal is the first 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 conservation area.

### **Legal Implications**

8. 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**

9. 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. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

### **Council Policy Framework**

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

### **Decision Deadline**

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

### **Recommendation**

12. It is recommended that Cabinet approve the **attached** Piercebridge Conservation Area Character Appraisal.

## **Reasons**

13. The recommendation is supported in order to provide a document to assist in the protection and management of the Piercebridge Conservation Area.

**John Buxton**  
**Director of Development and Environment**

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