
WEST END CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL

Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor John Williams

Responsible Director - Richard Alty, Assistant Chief Executive (Regeneration)

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To report the outcome of the consultation process for the West End Conservation Area Character Appraisal, including four boundary additions to the Conservation Area.
2. To seek Members' approval of the appended West End Conservation Area Character Appraisal and of four boundary additions to the Conservation Area.

Summary

3. Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 says that it is the duty of Local Planning Authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area that are Conservation Areas.
4. This is achieved through Conservation Area Character Appraisals and ultimately through detailed policy in the Local Development Framework.
5. The Environment Scrutiny Review Action Plan adopted by the Cabinet highlighted the need for Conservation Area Character Appraisals to be undertaken.
6. Through Appraisals, sound decisions can be made on planning applications received for development within Conservation Areas.
7. The West End is the seventh in a programme of 16 Conservation Area Character Appraisals as shown in the timetable considered by Environment and Scrutiny on 25 February 2010.

Recommendation

8. It is recommended that Cabinet approve the attached West End Conservation Area Character Appraisal and the four boundary additions.

Reasons

9. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:

- (a) To provide a document to assist in the preservation and enhancement of the West End Conservation Area.
- (b) To ensure Conservation Area protection for the boundary additions, which relate to the existing Conservation Area boundary in terms of age, form and use.

Richard Alty
Assistant Chief Executive (Regeneration)

Background Papers

- (i) Background Paper 1: Conservation Areas and Appraisal Statistics
- (ii) Background Paper 2: Consultation Responses and Actions

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S17 Crime and Disorder	No issues are raised.
Health and Well Being	The Appraisal encourages a high standard of environment, preserving and enhancing existing.
Sustainability	The Appraisal encourages a high quality, sustainable environment within the Conservation Area.
Diversity	No issues are raised.
Efficiency	Conservation Area Character Appraisals assess the character and appearance of the area and look at design requirements for new development. This should lead to savings in officer time and workload later in the planning application process.
Wards Affected	Pierremont, College and Park West.
Groups Affected	Residents of West End Conservation Area.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not recommend a change to the Council's budget or policy framework.
Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	This Appraisal contributes towards the priorities of Greener Darlington, Safer Darlington, Healthy Darlington and Prosperous Darlington.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

10. Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 imposes a duty on Local Planning Authorities to designate as Conservation Areas any *areas that from time to time they determine are 'areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'*. Conservation Areas are places where buildings and the spaces around them interact to form distinctly recognisable areas of special quality and interest.
11. Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 emphasises that it is the duty of Local Planning Authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area that are Conservation Areas.
12. Planning Policy Guidance 15 (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 areas through an Appraisal.
13. The Environment Scrutiny Review Action Plan adopted by the Cabinet highlighted the need for Conservation Area Character Appraisals to be undertaken.
14. Darlington has 16 Conservation Areas designated between 1978 and 1997; the West End Conservation Area was designated on 6 October 1975 and extended on 10 May 1990 and 29 April 1999. It has been previously known as Stanhope Road – Grange Road Conservation Area but the proposal is, whilst producing an Appraisal and proposing four boundary additions, to rename it West End Conservation Area, a name more closely reflecting its location.
15. The Appraisal is the eighth in a programme of 16 Conservation Area Character Appraisals as shown in the timetable taken to Economy and Environment Scrutiny on 25 February 2010. The target is to produce three Appraisals a year, thereby ensuring all Conservation Areas have Appraisals in place by 2012, although it has taken slightly longer than anticipated to produce the Town Centre and West End Appraisals due to the nature and scale of the areas.
16. Character Appraisals are a tool to assist in the preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas. Through Appraisals, areas, buildings and spaces of special landscape or historic and / or 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 can be highlighted through the Appraisal as can features causing intrusion or damage.
17. The production of a Character Appraisal is a step in the process of preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of a designated area, providing a basis for making sustainable decisions about its future. Undertaking an Appraisal offers the opportunity to re-assess the designated area and to evaluate and record its special interest. An Appraisal is not an end in itself, the process should lead to a better understanding of the character of the area and what makes it the place it is today, and so provide the basis for a positive Management Plan of the Area and / or an Article 4 (2) Direction to remove Permitted Development

Rights if this is considered appropriate. Appraisals provide a sound basis, defensible on appeal, for Development Plan policies and future Development Management decisions.

Methodology

18. Defining the 'special interest' of an area is the main purpose of an Appraisal and is gained from the area's appearance but other senses and experiences, local environmental conditions and historical associations can be drawn on.
19. Historic street patterns (building plots, layouts and the relationship of buildings to open spaces), archaeology (including any Scheduled Monuments), buildings (listed and unlisted), spaces and townscape, materials, green spaces, uses and the built environment and landscape can all contribute towards the character of an area.
20. The document is an assessment of the area's special architectural and historic interest, based on careful analysis of the area as a result of time spent in the area and academic literature sources.

Boundary Additions

21. PPG15 encourages Local Planning Authorities to periodically consider revision of Conservation Area boundaries to ensure they provide protection where needed. This is often done when Appraisals are produced.
22. Looking at the existing boundary it became clear that some areas had been overlooked when the Conservation Area was designated so the opportunity was taken to propose appropriate additions for comment.
23. Four boundary additions have been proposed:
 - (a) Pierremont - To the north, the house and grounds of Pierremont and the Manor Road area represent early development previously not included in the Conservation Area, but contemporaneous with other similar development.
 - (b) Pierremont Crescent - This would incorporate later nineteenth century rows of distinctive, high quality houses previously not included and also includes a number of historically and architecturally valuable properties on Woodlands Terrace.
 - (c) Abbey Road - This area makes a significant contribution to the approach to the Town Centre as well as being of architectural and historic importance.
 - (d) Ashcroft Road - A new area extending from Coniscliffe Road from to Cleveland Avenue has been identified as an area of historic importance and architectural quality, including houses by local architects Moscrop and Clark and the grounds of Greencroft.

Participation and Engagement

24. Internally, emails and a link to the electronic copy of the draft Appraisal were sent to senior officers within Planning, Highways, Building Control, Estates and the Communications Section.
25. Ward Members were informed of the draft Appraisal and of the event in the Arts Centre.
26. Externally, public participation and engagement is an integral part of the Appraisal process to encourage valuable public understanding and 'ownership'. The formal consultation period ran from Monday 30 November 2009 until Friday 15 January 2010, during which people were encouraged to comment on the draft Appraisal.
27. A letter was sent to every resident in the Conservation Area and within the proposed boundary addition areas. Also Ward Councillors included the details of the public engagement event and made reference to the emerging Appraisal and the potential for Article 4(2) in their newsletter, which was hand-delivered across the Ward.
28. Letters were sent to Darlington Civic Trust, Friends of the Railway Museum and the Darlington Historical Society.
29. Residents and retailers within the Conservation Area were a high priority and were likely to want more input than those living elsewhere in the Borough. Therefore an informal drop-in event was held in the East Hall in the Arts Centre between 18:00 and 20:00 on Tuesday 16 February 2010. At the event there was a rolling Powerpoint presentation, displays boards and copies of the draft Appraisal; attendees were encouraged to ask questions and make comments.

Key Findings from the Consultation

30. There has been a high level of support for the content of the Character Appraisal, the proposed boundary changes and management prescriptions in line with the attached consultation matrix. The document has been amended to reflect the views of those who responded where appropriate.
31. The participation event held at the Arts Centre attracted approximately 20 people. Again comments were supportive of the proposed boundary additions and of the content of the draft Appraisal. Residents were made aware of the implications of being in a Conservation Area and a degree of support was indicated for the potential for an Article 4 (2) Direction in due course.

Conclusions

32. The attached West End Conservation Area Character Appraisal is the eighth in a series of Appraisals concerning the 16 Conservation Areas in the Borough. The final document required some amendment in terms of the historical development of the area, where existing map data was unable to provide the level of detail that was evidenced by respondents. The proposed boundary additions received support and so have been carried forward. This document will provide a useful tool in assisting the preservation and enhancement of the

West End Conservation Area through development management.

33. It is the intention of officers to further explore the potential for an Article 4 (2) Direction in the Conservation Area in consultation with the residents and Ward Members.