

INTRODUCTION

Darlington has a wealth of heritage but it is failing to deal with conservation at a strategic level.

Great care should be taken to ensure that Darlington's unique historic built environment is not compromised.

This is a matter of urgency due to imminent and welcome developments in the Town Centre such as pedestrianisation.

Although there is a Conservation Policy there is no corporate commitment to it.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the recommendations of the Conservation Review Group :-

- (a) There is a need for a corporate commitment to conservation policy and for that commitment to be communicated across the Authority.
- (b) The Review Group feels strongly that staffing requirements need to be met at the right level.
- (c) Character appraisals of all the Borough's Conservation Areas need to be carried out as a priority.
- (d) The Council should pursue Article 4 powers in Conservation Areas, to give greater control over minor forms of development which can harm their character or appearance.
- (e) Conservation grant schemes operated by other Local Authorities should be fully investigated with a view to adopting appropriate schemes in Darlington.
- (f) Communication with the public needs to be enhanced, by both conventional and electronic means, recognising that partnership with the community is important to the realisation of our aims.
- (g) In order to ensure that the aims are achieved, regular monitoring and review of the conservation of the historic environment, particularly the Council's own heritage assets, is essential.
- (h) The Council should appoint Historic Environment Champions both at Member and Officer level.

FINDINGS

During its review of Conservation the Group identified the following :-

- (a) The Council has a statutory duty to preserve and enhance aspects of the Historic Built Environment. But Conservation is not always a major issue in decision-making and a more strategic level of Officer, with an interest in Conservation, will have more effect in promoting and ensuring that conservation is given proper consideration.
- (b) There is an opportunity to incorporate conservation within the Community Strategy – Darlington ‘A Better Place to Live’ and every effort should be made to ensure this will be achieved.
- (c) There is a lot of work undertaken that is permitted development over which the Authority has no control. This Council could pursue Article 4 Directions under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 in order to prevent inappropriate alterations to unlisted buildings which contribute to the character of conservation areas.
- (d) There is insufficient awareness of conservation issues within departments of the Council whose work can impact upon the historic environment. There is a need for greater co-operation and co-ordination and the appointment of ‘Champions’, both at Member and Officer level, could be the way forward.
- (e) The skills and craft base available within the Council’s workforce to restore and refurbish its own heritage assets is diminishing and needs to be addressed.
- (f) The statutory list of Listed Buildings for Darlington Borough is dated and there is an urgent need to implement the Policy to draw-up a non-statutory local list as proposed by Policy E32 of the Borough of Darlington Local Plan.

- (g) Some conservation leaflets currently in use by Darlington Borough Council were produced by Durham County Council pre 1997. This needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Purpose of Report

1. To report the findings and recommendations of a Policy Review Group established by this Scrutiny Committee with a view to making recommendations to Cabinet thereon.

Background Information

2. Councillors S. Robson and Ruck held a preliminary briefing meeting on 12th June, 2003 (**Appendix 1**) with Douglas Campbell, Assistant Design and Conservation Officer in order to discuss whether there was any merit in forming a Review Group together with the approach to be taken.
3. Following the preliminary meeting a small Task and Finish Review Group was established comprising Councillors Hartley, S. Robson and Ruck. A meeting of that Task and Finish Review Group was held on 18th July, 2003 (**Appendix 2**) at which issues around conservation were discussed and questions on conservation clarified with Officers.
4. At the meeting of Environment Scrutiny held on 21st August, 2003 it was agreed that Conservation be the subject of this Committee's main Review with a final report to Cabinet being submitted during September 2004.
5. A wide number of issues have been considered and discussed at the meetings and are referred to in the notes attached (**Appendix 3**). This report describes the outcome of the Review Group, it summarises the work undertaken, the findings from the processes and the subsequent recommendations.

Terms of Reference

6. The definition and scope of the Review Group was approved by the Environment Scrutiny Committee and its Terms of Reference are outlined below :-
 - (a) To examine and investigate the existence of a Conservation Policy within this Authority;
 - (b) To visit Conservation area(s), listed building(s) and registered parks and gardens(s) within Darlington;
 - (c) To undertake a fact finding exercise with regard to sources of funding e.g. grants, trusts, etc.;
 - (d) To network with other authorities and organisations which manage and administer Conservation areas to include both good and bad examples;
 - (e) To inform and educate agencies and seek to engage the wider community about the extent of the Borough's architectural and historic assets;
 - (f) To identify and make recommendations on gaps in public awareness of conservation within the Borough;
 - (g) To seek new and imaginative uses of existing buildings; and

- (h) To compile an Improvement Action Plan upon completion of the review.

Membership of the Review Group

7. The Membership of the Review Group was :-

- (a) Councillor Armstrong;
- (b) Councillor Burt (no longer a member of Environment Scrutiny);
- (c) Councillor Hartley;
- (d) Councillor Mrs. Hart;
- (e) Councillor Heaney;
- (f) Councillor S.J. Jones;
- (g) Councillor Lewis;
- (h) Councillor Long;
- (i) Councillor S. Robson (Chair);
- (j) Councillor Ruck;
- (k) Councillor Mrs. Scott; and
- (l) Councillor J.C. Vasey.

Acknowledgements

8. The Review Group acknowledges the support and assistance provided in the course of their investigations and would like to place on record their thanks to the following :-

- (a) Tim Wheeler, Planning Services Manager (now left the Authority);
- (b) Douglas Campbell, Assistant Design and Conservation Officer (now left the Authority);
- (c) Richard Alty, Assistant Director, Development and Regeneration;
- (d) Brendan Boyle, Planning Officer;
- (e) Steve Petch, Planning Services Manager;
- (f) Karen Graves, Democratic Support Officer;
- (g) Peter de Lange, English Heritage;
- (h) Alan Hunter, English Heritage;
- (i) Jules Brown, North East Civic Trust;
- (j) Jenny Leeming Darlington Civic Trust;
- (k) Brian Denham, Darlington Civic Trust;
- (l) George Flynn, Local Historian;
- (m) Chris Lloyd, The Northern Echo;
- (n) David Elliott, Conservation Officer, Richmondshire County Council; and
- (o) Alan Adams, Conservation Officer, Redcar and Cleveland County Council.

Methods of Investigation

9. The Review Group have met formally five times between 18th September, 2003 and 8th July, 2004 and the notes produced following each meeting are attached for information (**Appendix 3**).

10. The Review Group have undertaken site visits to assist them in the completion of their Review. The site visit to three of the Borough's 16 conservation areas was held on 21st November, 2003. The areas visited were Houghton Village, Stanhope Road/Grange Road and Northgate. The neighbouring authorities of Richmond and Saltburn were also visited on 8th June, 2004 to enable the Group to compare and contrast the way that conservation is

dealt with in neighbouring local authorities and also to consider what specific issues are faced by those authorities and how those issues are dealt with. The notes produced following each of these site visits are attached for information (**Appendix 4**).

11. A further method of investigation was by presentations. On 20th January, 2004 English Heritage, North East Civic Trust and the Darlington Civic Trust gave presentations to the Group which outlined their views on what a good conservation service in a small authority should be aiming to achieve, measures of good practice, conservation management, importance of Darlington's heritage and the need for conservation to be fully supported throughout the Authority. Following the wealth of information gained from the presentations the Group were of the opinion that Local Historian George Flynn had a great deal to offer and he was therefore invited to do a presentation, of his choice, to the Group. The notes produced during these presentations are attached for information (**Appendix 5**).

Grant Availability

12. Northgate Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme (HERS) is jointly funded by English Heritage and One North East Single Programme funds. Its purpose is to achieve physical improvement to the Northgate gateway into Darlington and the wider area through preserving and enhancing the character of the Northgate Conservation Area.
13. English Heritage approved the scheme during the summer of 2002. One North East funding was secured in November 2002 and the scheme was launched in January 2003. The Northgate HERS runs until March 2005 and some £400,000 will have been available during the period. Because of the depressed nature of the area grants were made available at a generous rate of 65% of eligible repair costs (75% for the reinstatement of traditional architectural features such as shop fronts, railings and sash windows). After a slow start, interest in the grants has accelerated this year and all of the available funds will have been offered within the next few weeks, leaving a number of applicants and potential applicants disappointed. Fourteen buildings will have been improved under the HERS but much more needs to be done if this important and historic gateway area is to be significantly upgraded.

Financial Implications

14. It is recognised that there are financial implications however there would be further resource implications in the future if resources were not made available now – It would cost more to remedy than prevent. The current revenue budget for Planning Services includes the salary of a Conservation Officer and, this currently vacant post, will be advertised in the near future. As well as staff time, several of the Group's recommendations will require additional funding, particularly the idea of a Council Conservation Grant.

Cost of Review

15. The Group was allocated a budget of £3,000 in order to undertake its review however not all of this money has been spent. The following is a list of the expenditure incurred :-
 - (a) £180.00 for coach hire for visits to Richmond and Saltburn;
 - (b) £50.00 token payment for use of sketches by Jim Gordon and Keith Belton within this Final Report;

- (c) £59.90 for lunch at Hayes Caterers in Richmond during the site visits to Richmond and Saltburn; and
- (d) There has been expenditure of £234 for Graphic and Printing work however this figure is subject to change as more copies are produced.

Consultees

16. The Review Group has received comments on its findings from the following people and organisations and these are attached as **Appendix 6** :-

- (a) North East Civic Trust;
- (b) English Heritage;
- (c) Chris Lloyd, Assistant Editor, The Northern Echo; and
- (d) Darlington Civic Trust.

Legal Implications

17. 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

18. 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.

Conservation Review Group Members

CONSERVATION REVIEW GROUP
Notes of Preliminary Meeting
12th June, 2003

PRESENT -

Councillors S. Robson and Ruck.

Officers – Douglas Campbell and Karen Graves.

Councillor Robson called the meeting to discuss what angles the Review Group (once established) could research regarding Conservation.

The following points were discussed/considered :-

- Is there a current policy on Conservation?
- What is included within the Policy i.e. listed buildings, boundaries, etc?
- Is Conservation mapped?
- Could the influences that affect Conservation be explored?
- What information was available within the Local Plan on Conservation?
- Was there a dedicated Conservation Officer within the Council?
- Northgate Regeneration could be considered as a Conservation Topic.
- British Standard of Conservation being defined as ‘Securing the future of buildings through sensitive intervention.
- Street Environment Best Value Review running parallel with a Conservation Review, however it was noted that buildings and streetscapes were separate issues.
- Looking at Best Practices and researching what other Authorities had achieved.
- Essex Council had performed really well and Heritage Lottery Fund had in fact gained most of their staff from Essex Council.
- Local Councils that had ‘made a difference’ included Richmondshire, which had a knowledgeable Conservation Officer and Newcastle that had Urban Conservation issues, but the current feeling was that Darlington was unique.
- Improvement of Tubwell Row following the demolition of the old Co-op building and the erection of the Cornmill Shopping Centre.

- Production of a Conservation Programme which targeted areas in order to make recommendations for certain areas.
- Clarification was sought on the difference between conservation, preservation and restoration.
- The inclusion of outside bodies on a Review Group such as the Civic Society and George Flynn, a local historian.
- Formation of a small study group to investigate what has been done and what can be done in the future with a report being prepared on findings to be considered by Scrutiny on 21st August, 2003.

CONSERVATION TASK AND FINISH REVIEW GROUP

Notes of Meeting

18th July, 2003

Present – Councillors Hartley, S. Robson and Ruck.

Officers – Tim Wheeler, Planning Services Manager, Douglas Campbell, Assistant Design and Conservation Officer and Karen Graves, Democratic Support Officer

Notes of the briefing meeting held on 12th June, 2003 were circulated as a starting point for discussion.

The following points were discussed/considered/raised :-

- The briefing meeting had been a useful exercise, conservation fitted in with the Cultural Strategy and Darlington was a distinctive town due to past efforts.
- Extracts from a document entitled ‘Moving towards Excellence in Urban Design and Conservation’ was circulated which contained a Matrix to provide a framework for thinking and was supported by both CABE (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) and English Heritage and also listed ten key points that could be the start of factors to consider.
- Darlington’s current position in relation to Conservation which could be likened to Best Value in that Darlington was somewhere on a point within ranges.
- Existence of any documentation in relation to Conservation and the possibility of drawing together a complete file of what was currently available.
- Constitution of a Review Group with aims and objectives in order to crystallise a coherent strategy.
- Local Plan containing maps which outlined the Borough’s current Conservation areas.
- The use of the CABE document as a framework as it had validity and the matrix could be worked through.
- Possible production of an evolving strategy as over time requirements change.
- Use of basic guidelines to produce a general assessment statement regarding the awareness of a Policy.
- Visiting of another Authority within the region to see both good and practices of Conservation – suggestions were Grainger Town in Newcastle, Harrogate, Richmondshire and Carlisle.

- Conservation being the main Review of the year for Environment Scrutiny.
- Draft Terms of Reference being produced prior to Environment Scrutiny of 21st August, 2003.
- Outside bodies and interested members of the public who could make a positive contribution to the Review included George Flynn, a local historian, the Civic Society, Ross Chisholm who did an excellent slide show of good and bad examples of before and after 'improvements', the key being to ensure the outside body was invited at the correct stage of the review to make contributions.
- Douglas Campbell giving a presentation to Review Group members.
- Inclusion of outside bodies in Workshop type discussions and the lack of interest from English Heritage.
- Remind local people what is in Darlington and maybe send information out with Local Searches that are carried out within Conservation Areas together with Estate Agents maybe providing information on Conservation when properties are for sale in Conservation Areas.
- Final outcome of Review was to ensure the production of a vision, have a Conservation Strategy in place and make sure the public are aware.

CONSERVATION REVIEW GROUP
Note Of Meeting
Thursday, 18th September, 2003

Present:-

Councillor S. Robson (in the Chair); Councillors Armstrong, Burt, Hartley, S. Jones and Ruck.

Apologies:-

The Mayor; Councillors Long and J.C. Vasey.

The terms of reference for the review were discussed and amended at the meeting.

The process for undertaking the review was also discussed, and it was agreed to undertake the review in the four part process, as detailed below:-

1. **Briefings**– Members to receive briefings from Officers and Outside Organisations, such as English Heritage and the Darlington Civic Trust, to enable them to establish the Council's position. The briefings to include the Council's powers, Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings. Visits also to be arranged following the briefings to sites in Darlington.
2. **Key Questions** – following the presentations as detailed at 1 above, determine any key questions or points that Members may want to raise in advance of the Site Visits and Investigations that are to be undertaken.
3. **Site Visits and Investigations** – visits to other Local Authorities in order to see good and bad examples of conservation.
4. **Improvement Action Plan** – draw up an Improvement Action Plan to append to the final report.

It was emphasised at the meeting that stages 1 and 2 needed to be undertaken prior to any decisions being made on stages 3 and 4. As such the pro-forma, that has been drawn up from the Terms of Reference, may need to be amended to reflect any information or guidance that is received.

During discussions the following points were raised/highlighted:-

- the number of conservation areas, listed buildings, etc., contained within the Borough;
- who to invite to the review meetings – English Heritage, Darlington Civic Trust, George Flynn, etc.;
- the need to be aware of the work of the Darlington Civic Trust;
- the meeting of the Darlington Civic Trust to be held on 24th September, 2003;

- the possibility of Members accompanying George Flynn on his guided walks;
- the visits to be undertaken as part of the review to Harrogate and Carlisle;
- the need to receive advice on the planning process as part of the review;
- the Listed Buildings Register and the number of listed buildings at risk;
- the current occupation of listed buildings and which buildings were Council owned.

After discussions it was agreed to circulate the following documents to Members:-

- Amended Terms of Reference;
- An Outline of the Conservation Resource of the Borough, including maps of the conservation areas and details of the listed buildings;
- Letter and Matrix from Cabe;
- English Heritage Checklist; and
- ‘Moving Towards Excellence and Design’ document.

CONSERVATION REVIEW GROUP

Note Of Meeting

Tuesday, 21st October, 2003

Present:-

Councillor S. Robson (in the Chair); Councillors Armstrong, Burt, Hartley, S. Jones, Ruck and J. C. Vasey.

Apologies:-

The Mayor and Councillor Long.

A presentation was given to Members on Listed Buildings, Archaeology, Historic Parks and Gardens and Conservation Areas.

Following the presentation a number of comments were made, which are summarised below:-

Listed Buildings:-

- it is the responsibility of an owner of a Listed Building to maintain it;
- it is important that Listed Buildings 'at risk' find, or are found, a viable use which will self-fund their repair/maintenance;
- anyone can request a building to be listed by forwarding photographs together with supporting information, to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS);
- informal conversations with DCMS had revealed that they had no plans to carry out a listing resurvey;
- 'thematic' listings are now undertaken across the country, and only a few of the best examples are chosen to be listed, to represent its kind;
- there was no intention to re-survey the Listed Buildings in the Borough;
- requests to make a number of buildings 'listed' in the Borough had recently been made but none of the requests were thought to be worthy of listing, for various reasons, and due to the fact that the majority of the buildings within the Borough were post 1840; and
- one recent application had been successful in respect of Stooperdale Offices.

Archaeology:-

- scheduling of buildings/structures tended to be more stringent than listing;
- ancient monuments are scheduled by the Secretary of State with applications being submitted directly to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport rather than the Local Authority;
- scheduled Ancient Monuments tend not to be altered; and

- Durham County Council acts as advisers through the Service Level Agreement that this Council has with them.

Parks and Gardens:-

- Darlington has two registered parks which are owned by the Borough Council and are graded in the same way as Listed Buildings;
- the Garden History Society need to be consulted if a Grade II listed park/garden is to be altered and the Government for any that are listed above Grade II;
- the trees or other specific features contained within the park/garden are not protected; and
- the Parks and Gardens are probably the weakest area of protection.

Conservation Areas:-

- Conservation Areas are not aimed at preventing change but to enhance/improve the area, if a proposal does not cause harm to an area it implies that it is preserving or enhancing the area;
- the process for designating Conservation Areas tended to be undertaken separately from the Local Plan, as the Local Plan process could take up to five years; and
- the Council has worked with the Civic Trust in the assessment of Conservation Areas.

IT WAS AGREED – (a) That the meetings of the Review Group scheduled for 21st November and 19th December, 2003, commence at 9.30 a.m.

(b) That site visits to a number of Conservation Areas in the Borough, including the Northgate Heritage area, Stanhope Road/Grange Road and Haughton Village/Green, be undertaken at the next meeting of the Review Group scheduled to be held on Friday, 21st November, 2003, commencing at 9.30 a.m.

**CONSERVATION REVIEW GROUP
NOTES OF MEETING
5th March, 2004**

PRESENT -

The Mayor; Councillor S. Robson (in the Chair); Councillors Mrs. Hart, Hartley, Ruck and J.C. Vasey.

Officers – Steve Petch, Brendan Boyle and Karen Graves.

The meeting was convened so that the Review Group could consolidate the work that had been done so far i.e. what had been learnt and discovered and also to identify the issues to mark for the final outcome. It was also suggested that whilst on visits to neighbouring Authorities the Group have a clear idea and knowledge of what they are observing. A list of Issues for discussion and the current Activities of the Assistant Design and Conservation Officer were circulated to assist Members.

The following points were discussed/considered :-

- Conservation Area Assessment – Following the question “was there a full description for every Conservation Area” A Planning Officer advised the Group that since 1968 the descriptions had been piecemeal with the early descriptions for Cockerton Green and Stanhope Green being very vague. Others had recently had a description attached whilst some, including Northgate, had had numerous extensions over the years. It was stated that a comprehensive overhaul was now needed.
- It was within Best Practice to identify the character and interesting points of Conservation Areas and also to provide photographs whenever possible. However it was stressed that it was vital to have a clear idea of the Council currently had prior to proceeding to the next stage.
- There was a requirement to balance resources with a need for this work and with only one member of staff it was difficult to achieve with the current day-to-day pressures. Long term projects tended to get pushed aside.
- Darlington Civic Trust has undertaken a pilot on describing Conservation Areas however it needs specialist structural advice on the buildings and requests have to be purely for an identified building and not an area.
- The possibility of advertising for a student currently undertaking a degree on planning and/or environmental issues to undertake some of the work during summer was explored. However there was an issue regarding the prioritising of areas, with Douglas Campbell having scope to undertake one or two with the smaller easier areas being completed quickly.
- There was a requirement for specific crafts and skills, which were non-existent in the Local Authority, when buildings in conservation areas were being restored and refurbished – Who supervised the quality of the work and how did this fit in with buildings plans. There was a need for the Group to know how far they could go on this

issue.

- English Heritage had given a grant of 50 per cent to undertake the North Road Project and it was advised that Douglas Campbell's specialist subject was the quality of work and ensuring that it fits in with the conservation area. English Heritage has very high standards and Douglas was very knowledgeable.
- There was a need to assess the current designated areas by initially identifying the character, the description of a conservation area was very wide with many possibilities. A basic description of areas would be provided with more details including doorways, chimneys, Railway Heritage connections, dates etc. In order to stop the nibbling away of buildings within conservation areas an assessment would have to be undertaken to identify the need of the building.
- The Group were all in agreement as to the need for a Policy before the conservation areas have all disappeared – Stockton was a prime example with nothing left at all as all the areas had been 'nibbled away at' over the years. The Group also believe that the public would be in favour of a Conservation Policy and that if taken to public consultation once drafted there would be a huge favourable response.
- The Group felt that if a Conservation Area Assessment had been undertaken for the Tyre Depot in Coniscliffe Road more input could have been given to the needs of the building, in particular with relation to height, design, materials used etc., however, Douglas Campbell had had some involvement in the design of the new building which had some modern aspects and was not a total copy of existing buildings. The Group felt that this was an excellent example of the importance of keeping Conservation Area Assessments up to date.
- Improvement of Local Records in Relation to Listed Buildings – The Group were advised that English Heritage were responsible for maintaining this list however there was an opportunity for Members to assist via the English Heritage Website. English Heritage had a scheme called Images of England whereby it was hoped to produce a photographic record of all Listed Buildings in England and with Members of the Public being invited to take the photographs – Darlington had 400 Listed Buildings with only ten to fifteen per cent on the website. The Group were keen to take this opportunity and discuss the possibilities with George Flynn.
- Education and Information – The leaflets in use by Darlington Borough Council were produced by Durham County Council pre 1997 when Darlington became a Unitary Authority. There was agreement within the Group that something was required however as Darlington was a relatively small authority financial restraints restricted the production of a useful leaflet for members of the public living in designated areas advising them of resident boundaries, what they meant, what they could and could not do within a designated Conservation Area.
- Darlington was a tourist area and the culture and heritage needed promoting – it was considered that the website could be utilised to promote conservation both on a technical and historic point of view.
- Grant Aid – Durham County Council had a Conservation Grant Committee which it was believed gave a 10 to 15% grant towards restoration of buildings in Conservation Areas

to enable works on shop fronts, doors and windows to be undertaken by specialist companies (Cllr. Hart offered to bring some leaflets to the Group).

- It was also believed that Teesdale had a Conservation Policy as the District had many converted buildings – Officers were requested to look into Grant Aid Schemes at Durham County and Teesdale District Councils.
- Corporate Communications – There were many issues surrounding conservation with many departments having an input some way i.e. highways and transport, planning, environment however it was believed that conservation was an after thought and that differences could have been made if conservation was taken into consideration.
- Article 4 Directions – This is greater control over Conservation Areas that at the moment was not utilised by this Authority. There is a lot of work undertaken that is permitted development which the Authority has no control over and cannot stop. It was reported that there is new legislation in hand to remove Crown Immunity which would enable greater control of some developments and that at the moment people had permitted development rights and could alter doors, windows, roofs etc with a prime example being Stanhope Road buildings. The Group unanimously agreed to include Article 4 in its recommendations.
- Resources – All points discussed during this meeting had resource implications; however there was a need to recognise that there would be further resource implications in the future if resources were not made available now – It cost more to remedy than prevent.
- Partnerships – It was reported that some working with the Civic Trust has been undertaken and it was hoped to get photographers for the Images of England website. The Group approved of Partnership working and hoped to explore different methods and organisations to take on board.
- The Civic Trust, which had a list of volunteer professionals, were keen to enlist the help of the public and were holding a public speaking event – a great deal of effort had gone into the event and members of the Group were encouraged to attend. Members also agreed to invite them to a meeting of the Group near completion of the Review in order to use them as a ‘sounding board’.
- Following a question the Officers were requested to approach the Darlington Assembly to investigate the possibility of establishing an annual awards scheme.
- Agreement was reached that the Chair liaise with Officers to determine the towns to visit to see first hand conservation schemes – suggestions included Hexham, Saltburn, Alnwick, Richmond, and Members were keen to make contact with Officers of the Authorities visited to look at the Best Practice and Policies.
- Finally Members discussed how they would like George Flynn to address the meeting and it was agreed that as, George Flynn had an excellent knowledge and vast slides on historic Darlington and its Listed Buildings it could be worthwhile asking the question ‘What area do you think is worth saving that had had no previous attention?’ His views on Darlington Conservation would also be welcomed. A suggestion was made that Chris Lloyd of the Northern Echo also be invited to attend this meeting

**CONSERVATION REVIEW GROUP
NOTES OF MEETING
8th July, 2004**

PRESENT –

Councillor S. Robson (in the Chair); Councillors Lewis and Ruck.

Officers – Douglas Campbell and Karen Graves.

APOLOGIES – Councillors Hartley, Mrs. Hart, S.J. Jones, Long and J.C. Vasey.

The Chair apologised for the short notice in calling the meeting, which was due to Douglas leaving the Authority to take up a post in Aberdeen. The meeting had been organised to seek advice and clarification from Douglas, plan how to present the Final Report and ensure that no vital principles were omitted from the Final Report.

During the meeting the following points were discussed/considered :-

- The Introduction to the Final Report needs to stand out and catch people's attention;
- The onus of responsibility of Conservation lies with the Council – Why does Conservation Matter? is here – The Section is under-staffed, under-funded and under-everything;
- In Authorities where a higher level of staff had an interest in Conservation there was more effect – Conservation was not always a major issue and a strategic level of Officer was needed;
- The Opening Paragraph should read
 - 'Darlington has a wealth of heritage and it is failing to deal with conservation at a strategic level!';
- It was stated that the Group needed to embrace quality standards – The Pedestrian Heart was creating public attention;
- Once the reader's attention had been held the following was suggested as the next paragraph :-
 - 'Now is the appropriate time to tackle these issues because of our new town Centre Development. Great care should now be taken to ensure Darlington's unique quality Core (historic built environment) is not compromised.'
- It was then agreed by all that once the Introduction had caught the attention of the reader the format of the Final Report should be :-

- Introduction;
 - Recommendations and Findings;
 - Body of the Report.
- It was recognised that a lot of work had been recently been undertaken on North Road and many achievements had been gained through the HERS Scheme – Douglas agreed to forward a report to Karen that he had prepared for the Financial Incentives Scheme on the progress of the Northgate HERS Scheme;
 - It was reported that an English Heritage Historic Areas Inspector had recently visited Darlington and hadn't realised the extent of Darlington's Conservation – The Council needed to push and promote – the West End had superb Edwardian and Victorian Buildings with Pease Bricks, Back Lanes, and Historic Parks including South park and West Cemetery;
 - An assessment of the known conservation areas was needed and new ones needed to be identified;
 - It was stressed that the Group could incorporate conservation within the Community Strategy – Darlington Was a Better Place to Live In;
 - It was mentioned that Conservation could also link into Tourism which it had been agreed was to be Environment Scrutiny's next major review;
 - The report should also make reference to descriptions of conservation areas, the items of interest; the grants available in order to keep properties in good repair, production of information leaflets to be made available to the public;
 - Article 4 should be adopted by this Council;
 - Douglas made reference to a meeting of the Group held in November 2003 whereby important points had been picked up;
 - Budget implications and internal consultation were a major consideration;
 - There was a need to build-up internal relationships with officers as many didn't have a great deal of knowledge what was going on in the Town e.g. highways and conservation Officers never communicated – The report should highlight this weakness;
 - A way forward could be familiarisation visits;
 - It was suggested that 'Champions' could be appointed – Member level could be Cllr. Lewis and John Buxton could be asked to encourage his Officers to give more priority to conservation;
 - Following submission of the Final Report to Cabinet it was hoped to follow up in March and ensure some answers had been received;

- English Heritage was stopping the HERS scheme and a new scheme was being introduced which was very similar to the existing scheme – bids needed to be made – the main criteria under the new scheme was that the areas needed to be in high deprivation and had to overlap a current conservation site – Douglas stated that the only area fitting the criteria was the West end of Bondgate and English Heritage had been approached to request Darlington be allowed to bid for the scheme;
- It was also mentioned that Victoria Embankment leading to the South Park could be an excellent area for conservation as it was a natural extension of South Park and was one of the Gateway areas;
- Village areas were too affluent and did not comply with the regulations to apply;
- Douglas informed Members that 80 per cent of Listed Buildings were Grade II and all had had a brief condition survey;
- It was agreed by Members that the following were the main findings of the Review Group;
 - Staffing – This needed to be suitable and at the right level;
 - Communication – This needed to be improved across the Authority and recognised at strategic level – Build it into Corporate thinking;
 - Conservation Areas – Full descriptions were required – This would reduce re-assessing areas;
 - Funding Availability – Staff salaries should be embraced, arrangements should be put in place to ensure adequate admin. support was available and grant schemes were fully investigated;
 - Monitoring of Conservation was essential to ensure aims were achieved;
 - Production of a user friendly leaflet for the public was a priority;
 - There was no Corporate Conservation Policy and the Review Group should indicate the need for one to be written and adopted, and put into effect corporately.

**Conservation Review Group
Note Of Meeting
Site Visits – 21st November 2003**

PRESENT – Councillor S. Robson (in the Chair); Councillors Armstrong, Burt, Mrs. Hart, S. Jones, Long, Ruck and J.C. Vasey.

Members visited three of the Borough's 16 conservation areas: Haughton Village, Stanhope Road/Grange Road and Northgate. They noted the very different characteristics of the three areas, and the different conservation and planning issues raised by them, as well as issues in common.

Members reached the following conclusions:

General

- Up-to-date conservation area assessments are needed to identify the elements which contribute to (and detract from) the character and appearance of conservation areas. Existing designation reports are insufficient for this purpose. Members recommend that officers draw up a work programme for the preparation of assessments over an appropriate timescale. The assessments should include illustrative material.
- 'Article 4 Directions' should be brought in to prevent inappropriate alterations to unlisted buildings which contribute to the character of conservation areas (eg important terraced properties).
- There is a need for more education and information for owners, prospective owners, estate agents, etc, in respect of conservation areas. Officers are asked to explore the possibility of the Council publishing appropriate leaflets.
- Members were "appalled" that there was no routine consultation on streetworks proposed by other sections of the Borough Council with conservation/planning officers. A system of consultation on schemes affecting conservation areas and listed buildings should be put in place as a matter of urgency.
- Consideration should be given to the Council introducing a grants scheme for buildings within conservation areas (over and above the Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme operating in Northgate). Schemes operated by other local authorities should be looked at for appropriate models.
- The multiplicity of ownerships in an area can present difficulties for enhancement proposals: partnership approaches should be fostered.

Haughton Village Conservation Area

- Haughton Village shows the importance not only of key buildings and a historic core but also of the setting of a conservation area.
- Also, how the character of a conservation area can be affected by a change of use of a property, not just development.
- It is a condition of the planning permission for the Eastern Transport Corridor that steps will be taken to reduce the traffic passing through Haughton. It is essential that the design of traffic schemes / streetworks takes full account of the character and appearance of the conservation area; consultation with conservation officers must take place.
- The site to the rear of No. 27-29 Haughton Green, currently being developed for housing, should be included on the list of sites to be visited by this Committee and the Planning Applications Committee in autumn 2004.

Stanhope Road/Grange Road Conservation Area

- Councillor Long drew Members' attention to the streetworks being carried out in the Vane Terrace area, where asphalt was being used as a paving material on new build-outs and in place of flag paving on adjacent footways.
- Conservation/planning officers had not been consulted on the works. Members agreed that the use of asphalt was inappropriate and asked the officers to see, as a matter of urgency, if flag paving could be reinstated/used instead.

Northgate Conservation Area

- The interest of developers and residents (such as those in Westbrook Terrace) in enhancement was welcomed.
- Members requested that the tall, old, stone wall that runs for some distance along the east side of Westbrook Terrace back lane be considered for statutory listing because of its historical associations with the Stockton & Darlington Railway. Officers were asked in the first instance to work with staff at the Railway Centre & Museum to ascertain its value.

CONSERVATION REVIEW GROUP

Note of Meeting

8th June, 2004

Site visit by Members of the Group to neighbouring authorities of Richmond and Saltburn.

Richmond

The Group were welcomed by David Elliott, Conservation Officer and points raised/discussed were as follows :-

- Conservation is central and very fundamental and should not be an 'add on' service.
- Referred to the Local Strategic Partnership and Richmondshire Community Strategy.
- Building Control, Development Control, Engineers, Architects and Conservation all form one unit and management structure.
- The importance of transport links.
- The great asset of the natural heritage of Richmond and the reliance on tourism.
- The need to look above 'fascia level'.
- Conservation is about managing change and the need to ensure the quality of development and reflecting the character and quality of the area in which the new building is to be imposed.
- Members are very supportive of Officers in giving advice on issues of design, conservation and listed buildings and schemes of poor quality are rejected.
- Discussed the Council's policy for buildings at risk and the systems in place to deal with any situations which may arise.
- Arrangements with the Civic Society and English Heritage in the consultation process.
- Heritage Lottery Funding.
- Relationship with the Highways Agency.
- Leaflets are produced by the Unit on design advise, energy conservation and historic buildings, building replacements and internal advise given on legislation.
- Discussed Catterick Garrison and Colburn and the changes expected through the New Garrison Town Centre Plan. Presently Catterick Garrison is not a Conservation Area.
- The authorities approach to Industrial development.
- Article 4 directions.

The Group then undertook a tour of Richmond Market Place and in particular to view the Co-op Supermarket which was granted permission against the recommendation of the Council and only received approval on appeal and has been built in stone to compliment the surrounding buildings; the Georgian Theatre which recently won the RICS Award 2000 for conservation; and the Housing Association Development at Ryder Court.

Saltburn

The Group were welcomed by Alan Adams, Conservation Officer who gave a presentation on his background in planning and conservation and what can be achieved by a conservation led approach and partnership working and gave a detailed background to the history of Saltburn from the start of its development in 1861 and changes following the War including the demise of the Hapenny Toll Bridge and the restoration of the Pier. Issues raised/discussed were as follows:-

- Conservation is not just the result of efforts of one Group but very dependant on the local authority departments, the community and funders all working together.
- Referred to the buildings which have been built in Pease Brick (the traditional white brick of Saltburn).
- The annual rolling programme to replace original railings and to resurface footpaths in york stone.
- No dedicated budget for conservation.
- Funding Opportunities which have been explored have included the European Development Funding for restoration to the Valley Gardens and Pier, Heritage Lottery Funding for the Pier and Conservation Plan for the Valley Gardens and Rural Development Programme Funding.
- Co-operative working approach to funding i.e. highways, tourism and planning.
- Community involvement is a high priority and the bandstand restored in 1997 was 100 percent community effort by local schools, local architect and local residents.
- Article 4 directions – have failed to get any in to the Town but have made some on individual properties.

Following the presentation the Group undertook a tour of Saltburn to see the conservation work that has been undertaken within the town and listed below are the areas examined :-

- Fire Hydrant – Saltburn 500 club helped to restore.
- Brockley Hall – funding received in 1985.
- Glenrow – last building to receive Town Scheme Grant for restoration and reinstatement works on railings – building now used for residential apartments but was originally 3 villa homes.

- Station Street – shop canopies.
- Railway Station – one of the first buildings owned by a Private Property Company but the trains now do not actually go into the station as it is being occupied by various retail outlets and cafes.
- Zetland Hotel (previously the Railway Hotel) – converted into apartments.
- Zetland Mews (previously Hotel Stables) – project of Cleveland Building Trust Funding to convert to apartments in 1985. Originally built in 1863.
- Milton Street Methodist Church – benefited from Town Scheme Grant.
- Victorian Post Box and Victoria Lighting Columns.
- 3 Milton Street – A new building of flats for Housing Association tenants.
- Brakemans Cabin – Grade II Listed Building - Groundwork Trust.
- Pier – saved in 1975 basic repairs – originally pier had cast iron columns/timber beams but these have been replaced with steel. Pier Head received Heritage Lottery Funding, local support and other funding.
- Pier Pavilion – restored 1990's Town Scheme Grant.

**CONSERVATION REVIEW GROUP
NOTE OF MEETING
20th January, 2004**

PRESENT – Councillor S. Robson (in the Chair); Councillors Armstrong, Burt, Hartley, Long and J.C. Vasey. (6)

APOLOGIES – The Mayor; Councillors Hart, S. Jones and Ruck.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Peter de Lange and Alan Hunter from English Heritage; Jules Brown from the North East Civic Trust; and Jenny Leeming and Brian Denham from the Darlington Civic Trust.

Presentations were given to Members by representatives from English Heritage, the North East Civic Trust and the Darlington Civic Trust, outlining their views on what a good conservation service in a small unitary authority should be doing; measures of good practice; the Conservation Policy and Practice in Darlington and examples of good practice from other authorities.

English Heritage also referred to conservation management; the importance of heritage, appreciation; the factors impacting on conservation management; Darlington's assets; heritage management; resources; the role of conservation officers; and a draft performance checklist. Reference was also made to training; the need for conservation to be supported right through the organisation and the need for the Authority to 'lead by example' in respect of the Listed Buildings it owned.

Jules Brown from the North East Civic Trust also outlined the importance of understanding conservation; the role of other organisations related to Conservation; the need to be pro-active and the need to set standards.

Jenny Leeming from the Darlington Civic Trust also outlined what a civic trust was; how the Darlington Civic Trust fitted into the national picture; its aims; what it had achieved to date; what they hope to develop in the future and their concerns.

Particular references were made to a 'local list'; spot listing and to the fact that systematic reviews of listed buildings no longer took place.

During discussion the areas recommended for inspection included local authorities within the Tees Valley, in particular the vastly improved town of Hartlepool, together with Harrogate, Alnwick, Richmond, North Tyneside and Tynemouth.

RESOLVED – That the thanks of this Group be extended to the representatives from English Heritage and the North East and Darlington Civic Trusts, for their informative presentations.

**CONSERVATION REVIEW GROUP
NOTES OF MEETING
15th April, 2004**

PRESENT -

The Mayor; Councillor S. Robson (in the Chair); Councillors Mrs. Hart, Hartley and Ruck.

Officers – Steve Petch, Brendan Boyle and Karen Graves.

APOLOGIES – Councillors Burt, Long and J.C. Vasey.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – George Flynn, Local Historian and Chris Lloyd, Northern Echo.

The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting of the Group and requested everybody to introduce themselves. She thereupon informed the Group why George Flynn, Local Historian and Chris Lloyd, Northern Echo were in attendance.

Mr. Flynn, Local Historian, then conducted a slide presentation to the Group, in which he gave his views on conservation, specifically covering the area from the traffic lights at Albert Road through to the Town Centre.

During the presentation the following points were discussed/considered :-

- North Road was a main road into Darlington and the grey standard graffiti covered railway bridge was not a welcoming feature, Manchester and Gateshead (during the flower festival) painted their railway bridges – Officers offered to investigate ownership of the bridge;
- Despite Darlington having a railway heritage there were only two plaques within the town, both on 146 Northgate, one above and one below the second-floor window, and both were inaccurate;
- North Road was the site of the world's first railway station but this was not highlighted in any way and the Skerne Bridge, recently featured, on the £5.00 note was inaccessible by members of the public – this should be addressed;
- At the corner of McNay Street a tattoo artist's premises was protected by unsightly roll-up metal blinds adorned with demonic pictures – Are these images permissible?;
- The Darlington Club & Institute in Northgate is an excellent building which used to be three terraced houses prior to conversion – it is believed to be a Pease's House and has a room set aside with pictures/photographs dedicated to the building – there is also a cobbled area at the rear which leads to stables;
- A recently-erected 'Get Into Lane' sign needs to be further back towards the railway bridge as there is not a lot of time for motorists to act – relocation of sign to be

investigated;

- The gable end of 29 High Northgate has a large visual impact to incoming traffic and pedestrians and it was suggested that an artist be commissioned to enhance the appearance of the wall;
- Members were reminded of the ‘Borrowdale Building’ (currently ‘In Car Solutions’) at 4 High Northgate ;
- Questions were raised as to the legality and positioning of sign posting and ‘A’ Boards next to the now closed massage parlour. The Council had a Pavement Policy and this was not being adhered to, also the signposts were wrongly positioned as it was impossible to turn into Leadenhall Street at that point – the turning has been missed!;
- Members were drawn to the signs over the windows of the Suites 4 Less Shop and to the temporary wooden-looking building of the Navy Club on opposite corners of Corporation Road;
- The next building of note was the 1960’s built Bedding Shop with overhanging frontage to protect pedestrians from rain and the terrace of buildings opposite which were hidden by fast food shops;
- The Salvation Army Citadel Building, built in 1887, has an excellent frontage and four foundation stones.
- Members were advised that the block of terraced properties at 143-163 Northgate had recently been de-listed, but there was no indication of a threat of demolition;
- Discussion ensued on 146 Northgate, currently occupied by Best Kebabs & Pizza, the building in which it is believed Edward Pease met George Stephenson whereby Darlington was born as a ‘railway town’ - Members all agreed that Darlington should have a ‘theme’ and it was suggested that ‘1825 Heritage of Railways’ be considered;
- The lack of statues in Darlington was considered, Chesterfield was erecting a statue of George Stephenson as he had died there but there was only a statue of Joseph Pease in Darlington and the Prudentia Statue had recently been removed from the Cornmill and placed into Council storage;
- The building currently occupied by Halifax Bank used to be the headquarters of Darlington and Stockton Railway however there was no plaque to mark this – Mr. Flynn stated that approximately two years ago the Halifax Bank agreed to erect a plaque on the building, the wording was agreed but the plaque still has not materialised;
- The final buildings to be discussed were Northgate House and the subways which are not ‘things of beauty’, the building currently occupied by Primark would, it was considered, look better with a third storey;
- However from McDonald’s onwards the buildings weren’t too bad even though there was a false front on British Home Stores and the Old Post Office had a lovely frontage;

- The presentation then ended but discussion ensued on the following :-
 - Bodies buried within the wheel located outside St. Cuthbert's Church;
 - Railway Heritage being the theme for the Market Square with litterbins and seating depicting Locomotion and rail tracks at crossing points;
 - The exploitation by Darlington of its Railway Heritage – Shildon was a lot further ahead – Darlington has to get into the Railway Corridor – Weardale was thriving and expected upwards of 60,000 visitors – Chris Lloyd expressed the view that Darlington's Railway Centre & Museum had a good collection of static exhibits but was considered 'boring' especially for children;
 - A good leaflet was required publicising Darlington's Railway Heritage and also its Quaker heritage – the Quakers were a significant force in the past and there should be something that could be utilised for leaflet purposes;
 - The public not having access to the John Dobbin Painting or the '£5.00 Bridge';
 - The procedure involved in getting a building 'listed' with particular reference to the Salvation Army Citadel especially if there was a change of ownership;
 - Brendan advised that listing requests need to be made to the Department of Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS), which takes advice from English Heritage. There was nothing to stop any member of the public from seeking a listing, but requests should be supported so far as possible with research and photographs. Members were reminded that officers were trying to persuade DCMS/EH to institute a comprehensive updating of the now-aged (1977) list for the Darlington urban area, although such full re-surveys were contrary to the DCMS's stated policy.
 - Brendan stated that it was good to see Mr Flynn's slides as eyes were immediately drawn to the clutter; and made reference to the Northgate HERS (Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme), which provides grants for structural stability and renovation of buildings but cannot cater for face-lift works. The two should go hand-in-hand and the benefits of a parallel scheme were considered;
 - The Chair stated that she was reminded of the old Durham County Council Financial Incentive Scheme whereby applicants were advised to try for other grants in order to get business funding from other sources but 'from the same pot';
 - The Chair requested that Brendan explore the face-lift idea and bring a report to this Review Group;
 - A Member also requested that investigations be made into the cost of painting the gable-end of Number 29 High Northgate;
- The Chair then formally thanked George Flynn for his interesting and informative presentation.

