

## The Minutes of the Berwick-upon-Tweed Conservation Area Advisory Group Meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2009.

### In attendance:

<b>Philip Miller</b>	Community Development Trust
<b>Margaret Shaw</b>	Castlegate Area Resident's Association
<b>Margaret Thomas</b>	St Bartholemew and St Boisil's Residents' Assoc
<b>John Robertson</b>	Chamber of Trade
<b>Peter Watts</b>	Community Development Trust
<b>Dr Chris Burgess</b>	NCC Conservation Team Manager
<b>Annette Reeves</b>	NCC Conservation Officer (North)
<b>Peter Rutherford</b>	NCC Area Development Manager (North)
<b>Alison Cowe</b>	Berwick Civic Society

### Apologies:

Cllr Jim Smith (but confirmed he would remain the NCC Member representative).

#### 1. **Nomination of Chair.**

Peter Watts agreed to chair this meeting. It was agreed that CAAG needed to retain its independence and credibility as an umbrella forum that fed into the decision making process. Mindful of the new authority structure and altered political landscape, it was proposed that Dr Chris Burgess should chair future meetings. A vice chair was also considered appropriate. This would be selected from one of the amenity groups.

**Agreed.** Chair Dr Chris Burgess  
Vice Chair An amenity group representative

#### 2. **Composition of CAAG : membership, secretarial support, role and input of representatives.**

It was agreed the Conservation Officer (AR) should continue to provide conservation input and secretarial support to the group in liaison with the chair. As well as community involvement from the three conservation areas and amenity groups listed above it was agreed to revisit the role of CAAG; to re-establish its remit and to ensure the most appropriate groups and organisations were given the opportunity to participate. Invitations should be extended to:

- Town Council
- Bridge Street Traders
- NCC Regeneration Manager (North Area)
- NCC Planning Member (North Area)

- NCC Design/HELM champions
- NCC surveyor/environmental maintenance
- Spittal Improvement Trust
- Tweedmouth West End Residents (confirm attendance and nominee)
- English Heritage (confirm continued involvement, particularly in relation to the delivery of the APS schemes)
- Heritage Lottery Fund? as part of the monitoring of the bids?

**Agreed.** AR/CB/PW/JR to pursue contacts; confirm with AR so that papers may be circulated in advance of the next meeting.

The report prepared in 2006 concerning the role, function and remit of CAAG should be revisited and brought up to date with the political changes, membership details and renewed relationship with the unitary authority and its partners, as well as acknowledge the active involvement of CAAG in the delivery of the Berwick regeneration projects.

**AR/PR** to prepare a revised report.

**Venue for meetings** : The Town Hall (if booked through the Town Council). JR agreed to ensure future bookings.

### **3. Minutes of the meeting held on 31<sup>st</sup> March and matters arising.**

The minutes were agreed subject to the following amendment; Cllr Robertson had conveyed apologies and had not been in attendance.

- i) Mount Road Appeal. No response from new legal team and probably out of time to pursue.
- ii) Listing candidates. AR had fed CAAG comments and input to EH who were concluding their analysis of the Tweedmouth buildings.

### **4. Regeneration Strategy – Protecting and enhancing the heritage asset (update on THI and Area Partnership Scheme bids and the role of CAAG in the delivery of the schemes).**

PR confirmed the Area Partnership Schemes were progressing in consultation with English Heritage. CB/AR were looking to amend the bids in order to secure a project officer post for their effective delivery. This may need to be amended in the light of very recent news that Berwick had secured the Townscape Heritage Initiative bid. This information was however, embargoed until June when the HLF would make a public announcement.

CB confirmed that a job description was being formulated for a Project Conservation Officer post to run both the Area Partnership Schemes, the

development of the THI to stage 2, as well as provide conservation input to casework in the three conservation areas of Spittal, Tweedmouth and Berwick. EH had verbally agreed to fund 50% of the post and One North East (through the single programme and NCC Regeneration service) had agreed to fund the other 50%. There was also an opportunity to increase the capacity of the wider conservation service in the north, through the back filling of the existing post to ensure there were adequate resources.

AR stressed the importance of CAAG as part of the delivery of the bids. Part of CAAG remit was to provide scrutiny and support to the overall projects as well as establish vital links with the community who would benefit from the schemes.

JR raised the issue of training, particularly regarding architectural terms and understanding of the conservation ethos. AR confirmed that continued learning was essential as the bids progressed. Training opportunities had been identified and built into the bids including heritage skills training; continued archiving and recording projects; social history recording and interpretation, as well as ongoing training for CAAG.

CAAG welcomed the news and thanked PR/AR for securing all three heritage asset bids for Berwick.

**5. Current Planning Applications:  
Demolition of unlisted buildings in the Berwick Conservation Area as part of redevelopment schemes for:**

- Governor's Garden**
- Blackburn and Price**
- Playhouse**
- Quicksave**

Approaches had been made to Development Management concerning the selective demolition of a number of structures at the above sites in advance of redevelopment schemes. PR/AR had appraised the following requests against the extant planning approvals and conditions as well as the conservation legislation and physical condition of buildings on site;

- Governor's Garden – the removal of the demountable buildings and workshops to clean up the site and remove asbestos.
- Blackburn and Price – removal of the industrial steel framed sheds but retention of the outer stone walls.
- Playhouse – concern that structure is dangerous (being monitored; this will take precedence if dangerous structure notice served).
- Quicksave – remove entire building; mainly cost driven (owned by OneNE) but no redevelopment scheme approved.

Where approvals had been given it was conditional on there being no demolition until a contract had been entered into for the carrying out of the works for the redevelopment scheme. This was to ensure there were no ugly gap sites created as a result of demolition far in advance of redevelopment. There also needed to be an acceptable and approved scheme.

All four sites occupied large and prominent locations within the conservation area. The close proximity of Governor's Garden/Blackburn and Price and Playhouse was also a consideration, as the cumulative impact of three large semi derelict spaces would have a considerable effect on the character and appearance of the conservation area. There were also building recording issues and archaeology conditions to take into account if buildings were to be removed.

The Quicksave building had also not had a scheme approved although Dr CB advised that the archaeology recording should not be an impediment to the development of an appropriate scheme.

PR/AR advised that demolition, or partial demolition should not be supported on any of these sites in advance of any redevelopment schemes. CAAG fully supported this view and endorsed the approach by officers in rejecting these proposals.

## **6. Any Other Business.**

1. Railway Station – MS asked about the interpretation boards that used to be on display and could be put back now Costa Coffee had gone. CARA also wanting to use some of the empty floorspace within the station buildings. AR confirmed that all parts of the station were included in the Conservation Statement that was being prepared for National Express and that the display boards were stored in the building. The conservation architect preparing the conservation management plan was aware of the intended office use.
2. Civic Trust – AC informed CAAG that the Civic Trust was disbanding. However, this did not affect the North of England Civic Trust or the Civic Society but did mean the loss of a grant fund resource.
3. Planning Committees – AC asked where these were being held and how it was publicised. Information should be available on the Northumberland CC website – PR said the north area planning committee would be held on the first Thursday in the month; the first meeting had taken place at Longhurst, but they would mostly be held in Alnwick.
4. Spittal Point and Tweedmouth Goods Yard – AC enquired about progress. PR confirmed there was no application in for Spittal Point and the goods yard was still at pre-application stage.

5. Character Appraisals and Management Strategies – MT concerned that these were still not being referred to as part of planning reports or properly understood by Members and Town Council when discussing planning matters in the conservation areas. All agreed this was a further training opportunity that should be linked to the development of the Area Partnership Schemes and THI bids. AR/PR/Dr CB could offer local training for the Town Council/Members either through CAAG or separately and this should be developed as part of the progression of the schemes as ongoing training/learning had been identified and built into the bids.

**7. Date of Next Meeting.**

It was agreed that meetings should be held roughly once a month and that a number of dates should be scheduled in advance.

2 <sup>nd</sup> June 2009	10.00 a.m. Town Hall
7 <sup>th</sup> July 2009	“
4 <sup>th</sup> August 2009	“