

## **The Minutes of the Berwick-upon-Tweed Conservation Area Advisory Group Meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> August 2009.**

### **In attendance:**

<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>Annette Reeves</b>	NCC Conservation Officer (North)
<b>Tony Houghton</b>	Berwick Town Council
<b>Philip Miller</b>	Berwick Community Development Trust
<b>Cllr Jim Smith</b>	NCC Councillor and HELM
<b>Alison Cowe</b>	Berwick Civic Society
<b>John Robertson</b>	West End Residents' Association

In the absence of the Chris Burgess, Margaret Shaw agreed to chair the meeting in accordance with CAAG's adopted remit report.

### **1. Apologies:**

Peter Rutherford NCC Area Dev Manager (North); Peter Watts, The Greenses Residents' Association; Rob Horne & Tim Kirton, NCC Regeneration (north team); Ross McLaughlin NCC Development Management (North); Mike Greener, Spittal Improvement Trust.

### **2. Minutes of the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> July and matters arising.**

The minutes were agreed.

#### **Matters arising;**

- 2.1 Cllr Smith queried what HELM stood for and asked that it be explained. AR confirmed HELM stood for "Heritage Environment Local Management". "HELM champions" were chosen from elected members as representatives of the local community. HELM and design champions were part of an English Heritage initiative to ensure that those working across local government had a key role in shaping the historic environment. The HELM initiative provides accessible information, training and guidance to decision makers in local authorities. It provides the tools and training to manage change; to increase involvement, skills and understanding. Anyone can access the HELM website which contains lots of information, guidance and training opportunities (often free) and AR encouraged CAAG to familiarise themselves with this.

[www.helm.org.uk](http://www.helm.org.uk) or from the English Heritage website.

5. AR had been contacted by English Heritage (Catherine Dewar) who had received the minutes and wanted to respond to AR's concerns and CAAG minute regarding the publicity and launch of the Heritage at Risk Register. EH were equally disappointed with the coverage and Catherine wanted CAAG to particularly note and minute the following;
- EH had no part in the original survey and gathering of conservation evidence; its interpretation and ultimate depiction and agreed that it was probably flawed depending on what was completed (or not) on the questionnaire.
  - EH agree that the coverage had trivialised the work undertaken in Berwick and were equally disappointed with the media spin and editing of the programmes/press statements. EH had spent a lot of time preparing information.
  - EH had stressed the partnership approach in the literature and were using Berwick as an exemplar; it is all about partnership and this is what Catherine wanted CAAG to note.
  - EH regional office (Newcastle) are meeting with the head of Strategic Planning in NCC (at his request) to discuss the survey; its apparent findings in relation to Northumberland.
- 7.i AR had written to Liam Henry and put a case for using the Town Hall free of charge for CAAG meetings. Decision awaited.
- 7.viii AR had investigated numbers of wheelie bins in the conservation area but had been through various NCC departments. This method of collection is here to stay. AR advised there could be no more conservation resource given to this issue. Tony Houghton raised environmental health matters and so it is more appropriate for Cllr Smith to pursue or Tony Houghton to take up personally as a concerned resident.
- 7.x The applicant for the former Woolworths shop had been contacted and so far had not responded or appeared willing to amend their submitted application. Current application is therefore, likely to be recommended for refusal.

**3. Regeneration Strategy – Protecting and enhancing the heritage asset (update on THI and Area Partnership Scheme bids).**

AR advised the two Area Partnership Scheme contracts had been signed by NCC. The Project Officer post to effectively run the schemes had been approved by NCC and had since been advertised. Recruitment is likely to take place in September. Any outstanding match funding issues should be resolved by then. Unlikely to be able to launch the schemes until the autumn.

**4. Heritage Protection Reform – A new planning policy statement for the historic environment (PPS15 & PPS16).**

AR had circulated English Heritage's leaflet with the minutes which explained the publication of the consultation draft of the new planning policy statement that was part of the heritage protection reform (PPS15 and 16 would replace the existing PPG15/16 on historic environment and archaeology).

AR explained that professional officers/practitioners through the strategic policy team at NCC would be responding formally, but the consultation did not exclude community groups or partnerships like CAAG.

AR suggested a sub group look at the document and provide a response on behalf of CAAG. AR happy to facilitate an initial discussion but stressed it was important for the group to formulate a response from a community/partnership perspective.

**Alison Cowe; Tony Houghton; Philip Miller** all volunteered. Input/liason from HELM also considered appropriate. AR to attend first meeting.

Closing date for submission of consultation responses is **30<sup>th</sup> October**. Future CAAG meetings are able therefore, to discuss comments.

**5. Current Planning Applications.**

Brucegate, redevelopment of dental surgery.

No objection to removal of existing single storey dental surgery building. Redevelopment for 2 storeys expressed as a single form (stepping down at the doctor surgery end and very close to this building). There was a mixed response to the increase in height, scale, form and massing with a continuous ridge running below the existing buildings in Well Close Square. However, some concern over the accuracy of the drawings and real ridge heights of the existing buildings.

CAAG did not consider 2 storey development would affect the character and setting of the Infirmary buildings in Well Close Square. However, would it 'harm' this part of the conservation area and did it positively enhance this part of Brucegate that had seen a lot of redevelopment already? There was a mixture of building heights and forms, remnants of earlier buildings on the site as well as modern infill.

No objection in principle, but considered the overall scale, massing and design; that used up all the existing footprint to be overdevelopment if

expressed as a two storey building. The scheme should be paired down/staggered to reflect the stepped ridges and forms of the neighbouring buildings (including the doctor's surgery).

AR would pass comments on to case officer.

AR informed group that there would be a formal presentation to the next CAAG on Spittal Point. The architects (Page and Park) had been sent a copy of the protocol and checklist and had requested they be given longer than 15 mins for a presentation given the size of the site and complexity of the proposals. CAAG agreed that 45 mins (30 mins presentation 15 mins questions) could be offered in this case. AR to advise applicant.

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

- i) Railway Station – MS enquired about any outstanding conservation issues as about to take on a lease. AR confirmed that all listed building matters were being dealt with and no further applications were before the authority. Still awaiting the Conservation Management Statement for the whole station area but this would not affect/prejudice the use of the rooms within the building.
- ii) Unfinished development – MT asked whether any powers to enforce the completion of development that had commenced (Tweedmouth). AR advised no planning powers; standard of build/completion checked through building regulations but unless left in a dangerous condition there were no powers to make a builder complete a development.
- iii) Blackburn & Price; Governor's Garden –MT reported there was activity on these sites and that items were being removed? AR said there were no items being removed or parts being demolished. AR and Nick Best had attended a morning with the archaeologist appointed by the applicant to undertake a thorough building analysis and recording exercise. This work was comprehensive and would dispel any myths/rumours about the dates, provenance, origins and evolution of all the buildings within the application area. The recording was being carried out over a number of days. AR/NB had discussed presenting the findings to CAAG upon completion. Cgms consultants were willing to do this.
- iv) Grey paint on stonework, 35 Woolmarket – AC enquired about this. AR advised it was an ongoing enforcement case.
- v) Tweedmouth Goods Yard – AC said it must come to CAAG even if architect presentation not forthcoming.
- vi) Design Guide – AC enquired why it was not on the agenda. AR reminded that it had been agreed that it would be an item for a future meeting. AC considered it too important and that it should be an item for discussion at the next meeting. MS (chair) suggested

setting out a strategy/discussion document as to why a design guide was considered necessary to enable the group to formulate some thoughts before a discussion. AC happy to do this, but requested it be on the agenda for the next meeting.

- vii) Spittal, English Heritage survey – AR reported that a formal notification had been received regarding The Pavilion, Promenade. AR hoped the adjacent shelter would also be formally assessed.

## **8. Date of Next Meeting.**

**15<sup>th</sup> September 2009.**

10.00 a.m. - venue to be confirmed.