

The Minutes of Berwick-upon-Tweed Conservation Area Advisory Group Meeting – 14th December 2010

In attendance:

Annette Reeves	NCC Conservation Officer (Berwick)
Alison Cowe	Berwick Civic Society
Margaret Thomas	St Boisil's Resident's Association
Peter Watts	The Greenses
Margaret Shaw	Castlegate Area Resident's Association
Peter Rutherford	NCC Dev Management Manager (North)
Philip Miller	Building Study Group
Cllr Bowlas	Town Council
John Robertson	Chamber of Trade
Chris Burgess	NCC Cons Team Manager (Chair)

1. **Apologies:** Spittal Improvement Trust (Dorothy Slater).
2. **Minutes of the 2nd November meeting and matters arising.**

The minutes were agreed. No matters arising.

3. **Regeneration Strategy – Protecting and enhancing the heritage asset (Update on THI and Area Partnership Schemes).**

THI – AR and Iain Ogilvie had met with the HLF as part of a required 'permission to start' process, to formalise the financial arrangements and grant application process. It has been agreed the THI will run from 'September to September' (to stagger the financial procedures). The two AP schemes run between financial years and although the quarterly returns for all three schemes will coincide; the 'annual action plan' programming and forecasting are more evenly spread to allow AR and IO's team to prepare the required project updates/monitoring reports and annual forecasting required. HLF want to meet 6 monthly and may attend a future CAAG meeting as part of project monitoring.

The THI complementary artist's work had been concluded and was due to be published in January. AR will use the artist's material as part of the THI work; support for the Changemaker project as well as contribution to the archive and community recording.

Area Partnership Schemes – Bridge Street; Two completed applications received for processing. A further completed application expected in the New Year.

Castlegate; One property in Castlegate has priced quotations and AR is assisting owners with the application process and supporting information. Castlegate slower and although some positive interest no other completed applications submitted at this stage.

Changemakers – Elizabeth Russell (young advocate) AR and Linda Bankier have commenced the Changemaker project with Berwick Middle School. A six week lesson plan had been developed with Year 5 looking at 'regeneration' in the historic environment. The children were concentrating on Bridge Street; developing map skills; researching archive material to understand the history of buildings/past uses; recording buildings on site; interviewing owners and users and seeing the 2 sides of conservation led regeneration through the demolition of the Playhouse and restoration/new use of Dewar's Lane Granary.

They would also be designing their own building on the site of the Playhouse and range of imaginative uses for the Granary. Field work due to commence in January. Elizabeth will then feed this into her own project work on 'engaging young people' in Planning and Conservation. Elizabeth is also using the Changemaker project as part of her degree dissertation. As a young representative on the RTPPI committee she has attracted the attention of the RTPPI president who was very interested in the Berwick heritage projects; work with young people and interaction with local schools.

4. Berwick Listed Building Surveys (update).

AR received notification on the following buildings that had been rejected for statutory listing;

- 4, Bank Hill, Berwick;
Too altered to be of special interest in a national context. Local interest recognised by its inclusion within the Conservation Area.
- 3-4, Greenside Avenue, Berwick;
Not of the high levels of architectural quality and intactness necessary for a building of this date to be listed. Does make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area.
- 127-129, Marygate, Berwick;

Has early C19 origins but is multi-phase in character and standard rather than special and not of the intactness or quality necessary for a building of this date.

- 10, Palace Street East, Berwick;
Not the extremely high quality or intactness required in a national context with the loss of interior fixtures and fittings. Makes a positive contribution to the Conservation Area.
- Tourist Information Centre, 104-106, Marygate, Berwick;
Not of the architectural quality or intactness required for a commercial building of this late date to be designated. Of some local interest for its good quality exterior, which makes a positive contribution to the Conservation Area.
- 77, Ravensdowne, Berwick;
Loss of original internal period features; replacement of more substantial items such as roof structure and staircase and C20 alterations removed all evidence of its earlier plan form and arrangement of rooms.
- 40-44, Chapel Street, Berwick;
Too altered to be of national importance. No 44 the least altered and makes a positive contribution to the Conservation Area.

AR had received one listing designation:

Rampart House had been listed Grade II.

- A house of c1799 with mid-late C19 upgrading.
- The 1799 portion of the building remains distinct, with an intact original internal arrangement.
- The evolution of the property is clearly readable both internally and externally with the increase in status during the C19 reflected in the fabric of the building through distinct phases.
- Period features and good proportion of original fixtures and fittings remain for a property of this date as well as high quality later additions.

PM confirmed the BSG had made an impressive beginning in Bridge Street. The files had been too large to circulate. PM would put all the photographs/recording information on a memory stick for AR to view/circulate prior to the next meeting.

5. Design Guides – progress AC.

AC had emailed a sample paper to CB/AR this morning. This suggested the structure for the leaflets; overview of historic information and 'good practice' guidance e.g. paint tones; mortar mixes etc., AC had picked out masonry from

the Character Appraisals and condensed this advice/information into one leaflet. She had included the tracked changes to illustrate how many times masonry advice/information was mentioned in the appraisals. She intended to include advice on the 'pitfalls' e.g. the danger of using cement pointing or using 'bright white' on traditional buildings and other inappropriate bright colours in the conservation area.

AR reminded the need to reference the Public Realm Strategy (which was informed by the CACA's CAMS and Shopfront Design Guidance) in relation to colours and palette of materials. AR had discussed with the consultants and their graphic artist how to portray the tonal ranges of heritage colours/materials etc., which was meant to be informative but not too prescriptive. The leaflets needed to reflect this advice.

AR/CB will provide comments, technical input and advice on the draft text/format before the next meeting. CB may have some funding toward a leaflet production if commissioned before the end of the financial year.

6. Berwick's Future (update on progress of project groups).

- **Barracks** – consultant report delivered and with the detailed economic study the consultants are looking at feasible options. EH opinion divided; commercial arm want something to happen but the conservation team not yet convinced by the options. This needs to be resolved if taking any options forward to the next stage of development/research.
- **Quayside** – Group had recommended a re-ordering of priorities, (given the work on the regeneration of the Barracks) to divert resources to this site with a possible design competition for any extension/new development for the Barracks.
- **Movement** – Group looking at designs/implementation of a number of sites including Golden Square; Marygate (reduction in traffic); Maltings (shared parking/pedestrianisation and enhancements); Parade Ground (coach parking and enhancement of space); Castlegate car park (looking at long term aspirations). There are some conflicts between the aspirations of the Public Realm Strategy (that suggests full pedestrian access/priority for some sites) and the Movement Strategy. There are obvious overlaps and tensions between the various project groups and this needs to be resolved. AR also reminded that Bridge Street Car Park and Maltings Car Park are the public realm components of the THI and AP schemes and need to be approved by

HLF/EH. The consultants who had produced the public realm strategy had been commissioned by Inspire Northumberland to assist with the detailed design work of these important spaces as part of the Year 1 Action Plan.

There is also a lot of demand for residents parking and conflicts with bus routes (Railway Street) and the ongoing aspiration to relocate the station's commercial compound – is the external funding still there? Sites need to be prioritised; costed and properly resourced.

- **Public Realm** – document to be approved and published in the New Year. AR using this document to inform the public realm elements of the heritage schemes. It will be widely available and published in a variety of formats.
- **Marina** - PW reported that no further updates. Remains as reported at the last meeting.
- **Berwick's Future Partnership** – PW reported on NCC Regeneration restructuring and possible implications for Berwick's Future work. Suggestion that a 'private company' be set up. Not sure how this would affect the partnership or current resources and input of NCC.

7. CAAG website.

The website was up and running. CB had put all the minutes and agendas on the website as well as short pieces about the partners of CAAG. Can possibly include links to partner websites and when more to report on the heritage schemes can include a 'project update' page. AR thought the website very clear and easy to navigate; will be useful to provide publicity and ongoing input to community consultation.

8. Current Planning Applications.

Land adjacent 5 Mount Road, Tweedmouth revised drawings.

AR reported that following CAAG's comments and conservation advice AR and the Planning Case Officer had met with the applicant's agents. Negotiations had produced a far more suitable scheme that included the introduction of a pitched slate roof and design changes to the principal elevation to provide more symmetry and vertical emphasis of openings. However, the agents in consultation with their client had been unable to meet the energy efficiencies required for this scheme. The revised submitted

drawings were therefore, a compromise solution that mediated between green credentials and the character and appearance of the conservation area. AR considered this acceptable; an improvement on the previous scheme design that would not cause 'harm' to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

CAAG had not seen the earlier sketches but understood officers had negotiated a number of design changes. It was recognised this was a 'compromise'. Comments will be conveyed separately to the case officer in support of the revised scheme.

9. Any Other Business.

- AC – Building Study Group also looking at Bridge Street (as well as Changemaker Project) – see PM report under item 4.
- AC – NCC Chief Executive is giving a talk to the Civic Society on the 12th January. All welcome. CS considering questions in advance.
- AC – Section 106 on Governor's Garden and Blackburn and price Site going to Committee this afternoon. AC attending as Civic Society has made Members aware of the importance of the Governor's Garden site. CS concerned that affordable housing element is far less than previously considered but approval is recommended. PR advised the affordable housing element reflected the developer's ability to partner Johnnie Johnson Housing and was acceptable.
- PR – Had given a talk to Morpeth Civic Society who was an enthusiastic group. They were looking to re-focus their energies on Morpeth Town Centre. PR had conveyed the work of CAAG and the relationship with the regeneration strategy. Considered AR could provide some input/advice to the group about conservation led regeneration.
- CB had always considered the Berwick CAAG model could be rolled out to other communities. An offer of help and support was extended to Morpeth Civic Society.

10. Date of next meeting.

Discussion centred on whether to change the day of the meeting as well as finding a suitable alternative venue (the former Berwick Borough Council Committee Room 1 was no longer available due to ceiling collapse/water damage following recent wintry conditions). Community Development Trust had provided the Trust's small meeting room today free of charge – but lack of CAAG budget to book venues/meeting rooms is an issue.

CB requested partners' assistance – could any of the groups represented on CAAG provide a venue for meetings free of charge? Previous use of the Town Hall discounted; as Trustees require payment; Town Council and Development Trust will however enquire through their organisations.

Agreed to change meeting day to Thursdays. Next meeting scheduled for Thursday 13th January. Offer of meeting rooms to AR prior to this please.

13th January 2011 (venue to be confirmed).