

The Minutes of the Berwick-upon-Tweed Conservation Area Advisory Group Meeting on 15th December 2011.

In attendance:

Chris Burgess	NCC Conservation Manager (Chair)
Annette Reeves	NCC Conservation Officer (North)
Peter Watts	The Greenses Residents' Association
Margaret Shaw	Castlegate Residents' Association
Philip Miller	Building Study Group
John Robertson	Chamber of Trade (for part of the meeting)
Tim Kirton	NCC Regeneration (North)
Bryony Onciul	Spittal Improvement Trust
Alison Cowe	Civic Society
Bob Steward	(PW replacement for the Greenses)

1. Apologies:

Peter Rutherford, Margaret Thomas, Wendy Ross Smith, John Robertson (Tweedmouth), Cllr Taylor, Alan Bowlas.

Bob Steward was welcomed to the meeting as Peter Watts replacement for the Greenses Resident's Association. It was understood Ian Pope would be the Community Trust's replacement on CAAG. The Chair took the opportunity to thank Peter Watt's for his contributions to CAAG over the years, both as a community representative and former borough council HELM champion.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 24th November and matters arising.

The minutes were agreed. Matters arising;

1. MS reported the Wedding Parlour were totally thrilled with their shop front repairs undertaken through the grant scheme and were promoting it at every opportunity. It was the best advertisement for the schemes.
2. MS also advised Berwick Middle School will be using the Changemaker project as part of future curriculum activities and would be rolling it out across the entire school and not just a single class. AR offered assistance as part of the ongoing complementary initiatives being considered for years 2/3 as well as the Council's commitment made to the Changemaker initiative.
3. CB reported the two new conservation officers would be starting on the 9th January. It was hoped to introduce them to CAAG.

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

AR advised it was only 3 weeks since the last meeting and not much new information to report. However, a new application (expected) had been received within the **THI**. It included the former Army and Navy Surplus Store (new tenant) and range of derelict buildings to the rear. It was a large scheme that would require careful consideration concerning bringing vacant floorspace back into use and potential new business opportunities. AR and Iain Ogilvie were due to meet with the applicant and agent before Christmas to enable an application to be processed in the New Year. A highway licence/road closure was also being progressed for Eastern Lane to enable works to commence on 39 Marygate in mid January.

Area Partnership Schemes – Bridge Street: Café Curio - works were continuing on site until the Christmas trade shutdown (expected to resume/be completed in the New Year). Chimney and roofing works were almost finished.

Magna Tandoori application is still being processed (need for EH approval and our own appointed accredited conservation engineer to assess the proposed schedule; as works largely structural repairs). Contract expected to be released for a March/April start date.

Castlegate; Applications reported previously are being progressed to contract and a long awaited application has been submitted for 4-6 Castlegate, Grade II listed building. Whilst this is only one half of the listed building it is hoped the intended repair works to 4-6 (stonework repairs/roofing/leadwork/windows and shop frontage joinery repairs will encourage the owner of no 8 to apply. 1 Castlegate is a potential application (Grade II* listed building). AR trying to encourage 'impact buildings' to apply as identified in the Delivery Plan.

Public Realm (Maltings and Bridge Street car parks) nothing further to report at this stage.

Complementary Initiatives – as reported previously, being progressed as part of Year 2/3 activities.

4. Berwick Building Surveys (local list).

Whilst no further statutory listings expected AR had received notification from EH that the cellars beneath 10, 12, and 14 Silver Street had been statutorily listed Grade II. The report was very thorough and made it clear what was *not* included in the listing as much as describe the structures of national importance.

In summary; the cellar beneath 10, 12 and 14 Silver Street is considered to be of C18 because of the form of building directly above (identified as the Haggerston's town house rebuilt by 1702) with the entrance and barrel vaulting dating to 1781. The construction preserves two types of C18 cellar construction (pair of barrel vaults alongside extensive area of groin vaults) and represented a rare example of a C18 bonded store.

It is to be noted that numbers 10-16 (odd) and all other structures on the site are *not* statutorily listed and this explanation and detailed assessment means the curtilage or setting argument cannot be used as the listing is very specific (with a map and other clear supporting information).

CB reported he is still progressing a 'local list' idea and possible brief. It may be too late to recruit a student from Newcastle University as students had already selected their projects. AR had submitted a project form and BO had spoken with the course tutor. BO had offered some volunteer time if there were no student placements. CB/AR/BO to meet in February with the 2 new conservation officers to progress a local listing project. PW suggested looking at the Middlesborough model that was presented to the community conference last week (PW reporting on next).

In terms of the policy context the current draft NPPF does not include provision for local lists. CB/AR been discussing conservation issues with policy colleagues. Need to bring all these things together; David Rowlinson looking to re-launch and consult further on the Eastern Arc Area Action Plan with the Town Council input and had asked AR to provide update on the various heritage led regeneration projects. There was also the HELAC study and emphasis on contributions from the 'third sector'. This would also fit in with Cllr Taylor's presentation on the localism agenda and neighbourhood planning; as these are all community led initiatives. David Rowlinson looking to do something in March – possible way to introduce local listing through the planning process.

5. Feed back from conference/localism agenda (PW).

PW had circulated his presentation and provided a written summary sheet. He reported on the conference overall that included representatives on the Historic Town's Forum (English Heritage; North of England Civic Trust; national parks; professional officers etc.,). There were 7 presentations that addressed the 'new context of the Big Society' – a 'shock' to the professionals but inspiring.

Jules Brown (NECT) conveyed there were over 10,000 conservation areas (the bits we love) and tiers above that – this needed to be broadened to include social and cultural significance (NPPF modified). Conservation

Areas must have a practical side; management – more vision, enhancement and economic growth – not just ‘pretty, pretty’. He cited Berwick CAAG and conveyed how it had grown and unlocked those involved from ‘anger’. The inclusion in EH’s Valuing Places was testament to the work. Jules said historic environments attract creative people; growth contributes towards the capacity gap in local authorities.

Localism has a long tradition with a deep involvement of local interest and volunteers with drive and ambition (cited Dewar’s Lane Granary); this atomised all the players, direct democracy is the trend.

Planning is moving toward making it easier for change of use, enhance neighbourhood plans within the LDF process – community has the right to challenge and bid. Neighbourhood plans need to be in conformity with an LDF – not a wish list – and pro growth but must ‘add to’ the LDF ‘plan for growth’ and gave Fish Quay as a case study.

Middlesborough presented a case study that focused on local listing; all the pitfalls and processes and this may be useful to refer to when considering one for Berwick.

EH conveyed research on volunteers; where they are; what they do and referred to the HELAC project where Northumberland CC were one of the 5 pilot areas to be looked at.

Northern Architecture conveyed their approach to community planning. PW gave his presentation from a community trust perspective (circulated) and the National Parks spoke about their role and perspective on localism.

PW was expecting copies of all the presentations. He will send these to AR and if not too large files there was scope to put all presentations on the CAAG website.

6. Design Guides (AC).

AR had taken some photographs for the mortar leaflet showing the various examples and ‘pitfalls’ to avoid. CB/AC would be formatting the leaflets with photographs and illustrations in the New Year.

7. Berwick’s Future (update on progress of project groups).

Not much to report since the last CAAG meeting.

- **Movement Group** – TK feedback received on the parking strategy (CAAG will be consulted/invited to a meeting).

- **Berwick's Future Partnership process** – facilitated review of Berwick's Future Partnership re-launch to be discussed at 12th January meeting.

8. CAAG website (CB).

Not updated yet but various presentations will be put on as well as minutes.

9. Current Planning Applications.

JR had brought an application to the meeting that potentially impacts on the conservation area. AR had been involved in providing pre-app advice and the submission for a single storey annex building within the grounds of Elder House (55B Ravensdowne). The application and design and access statement was briefly discussed. CAAG comments to be sent to the case officer immediately (and circulated separately) rather than wait for the next meeting in January. CAAG requested AR to provide conservation officer comment regarding the detail but offered no objection to the siting/scale/mass and simple design of the proposal.

10. Any Other Business.

- i) AC – the Coalyard application has been deferred (on highway grounds).
- ii) AC – Civic Society plaque award presented to Dewar's Lane Granary recently to the Berwick Preservation Trust.
- iii) AC – Dep Chief Exec of NCC is speaking to the Civic Society in the New Year as part of their speaker programme.
- iv) BO – SIT is buying the fishing shiel (support from Lord Joicey) but is waiting for charitable trust status; they were turned down previously but this is now being resolved particularly around liabilities. SIT progressing the Eco museum concept around the fishing shiel/smokehouses/river connection. Peter Davis may be able to give a talk to CAAG about the Eco museum idea.
- v) CB – Conservation Team making various bids/progressing a project model for water logged deposits in Berwick (part of a national scheme).

11. Date of Next Meeting.

AR to liaise with the Town Council regarding meeting dates in 2012; aiming for last Thursday of the month and will set an annual programme of meeting dates. Thanks to Town Council for continued use of their offices.