

## The Minutes of the Berwick-upon-Tweed Conservation Area Advisory Group Meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> July 2011.

### In attendance:

<b>Chris Burgess</b>	NCC Conservation Manager (Chair)
<b>Annette Reeves</b>	NCC Conservation Officer (North)
<b>Peter Watts</b>	The Greenses Residents' Association
<b>Peter Rutherford</b>	NCC Development Management Manager (North)
<b>Cllr John Taylor</b>	Chair of North Area Planning Committee
<b>John Robertson</b>	West End Resident's Association
<b>Alan Bowlas</b>	Town Council
<b>Margaret Shaw</b>	Castlegate Area Resident's Association
<b>John Robertson</b>	Chamber of Trade
<b>Dorothy Slater</b>	Spittal Improvement Trust

A presentation/update on the Berwick Project from Sue Milner and Martin Ryan took place at the end of formal business (recorded at the end of the minutes).

### 1. **Apologies:**

Philip Miller (Building Study Group); Margaret Thomas (St Boisel's residents).

### 2. **Minutes of the meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> June and matters arising.**

The minutes were agreed. Matters arising;

- i) Not sure if the remedial works to the plaque/signage lettering on the Leaping Salmon had been undertaken (by 22<sup>nd</sup> July?).
- ii) The Vice Chair (MS) circulated a response to CAAG's 18<sup>th</sup> April letter (received on the 27<sup>th</sup> July) from the Regeneration North Area Manager. Members took time to read the letter and it was agreed it would be acknowledged immediately (by MS) but CAAG would consider whether to respond further and whether to accept the offer of a presentation on the work of the Berwick's Future.

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

AR reported that annual reports/budget forecasts and action plans had been drawn up for all three schemes with the relevant forms and reports being submitted to English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund. These reports were partly looking back at what had been achieved/delivered in Year 1 and partly looking forward to which buildings/schemes and projected funds would be drawn down in Year 2.

**THI** – Grant application expected in August for a substantial group of interconnecting listed buildings at the corner of Marygate/Eastern Lane; currently vacant and priority/critical buildings within the THI. AR has been working with the family owners/appointed agent over the last 10 months to seek a comprehensive survey of repairs/refurbishments to bring the building back into use. This would be the first THI grant application that would show real townscape enhancement, make links to the Eastern Lane public realm works, as well as be a prominent frontage/enhanced shop front in Marygate.

Unfortunately, the work being progressed on the former Happit building is not producing the same response or potential THI application in spite of recent meetings/discussions. This building is listed, vacant with a poor shop front and in need of repair to the principal elevation and if dealt with as a comprehensive frontage; *would* meet the funding criteria. AR noticing a different commercial/retail attitude to 'heritage led regeneration' from the larger retail/pension fund authorities and their apparent reluctance to invest in what is perceived as merely 'cosmetic improvements' (deemed commercial suicide); rather than long term investment (with public funds) in historic fabric that not only benefits the marketability of the shop unit but the town's overall retail offer and eventual return for the owners of the building.

Other smaller THI grant schemes are still being discussed/progressed in West Street. Most of the recent enquiries have elements of vacant floor-space and so the THI can assist with fabric repairs and improving the retail/commercial offer as part of the wider heritage led regeneration initiative. Some of the larger buildings in West Street are being surveyed but have leasehold/legal issues that need to be resolved to free up access to unused commercial floor-space. The owner is pursuing these matters in advance of a possible application for fabric repairs. These buildings could be Year 3/4 projects and demonstrate how much lead in time and survey work is required.

**Area Partnership Schemes – Bridge Street**; repairs imminent for 2 grant approved schemes; new applicants coming forward and AR met with appointed architect/agents to progress works of repair and improvements to 2 additional listed buildings. Further grant applications are therefore, expected in August.

**Castlegate**; 1 application contracted on. Planning application submitted for new shopfront/window replacement in advance of possible grant application for 71 Castlegate and AR meeting with other owners/agent of adjacent buildings to progress repairs/window refurbishments.

AR is continuing to pursue other enquiries and contact with building owners to try to build a critical mass of improvements and is pleased to report that interest has steadily risen from local businesses in Castlegate. Hopefully this will produce more applications as schemes get underway and confidence grows in the process.

**Public Realm** (Maltings and Bridge Street car parks), technical meetings are being held to progress the detailed designs and fully costed up schemes. The programme has slipped but consultants are still working on an 18 months timetable and CAAG will be consulted on the designs at either the August or September meetings.

#### 4. **Berwick Listed Building Surveys.**

- **12, Palace Green:** rejected for statutory listing. Although constructed between 1822 and 1852 the building has been substantially altered; stripped of internal features and not of the quality or intactness necessary to meet the criteria for listing.

AR does not expect many more surveys to come forward; as the EH Berwick listing project draws to a conclusion. AR discussing with the Conservation Team Historic Environment Record Officer (Liz Williams) a discreet project to archive/make accessible all the architectural and historic information to come from the Berwick surveys.

CB/AR/LW to discuss a future project; possibly involving a small funding bid or support for a student placement to catalogue the data that could be used to form the basis of a local list as well as improve understanding of the character of the conservation area. Need developers/future owners/community and planning professionals to be aware of this information, as it can be used to inform the decision making process.

#### 5. **Design Guides – draft leaflets (AC).**

AC not present. AR advised that AR/AC had not had the time to discuss the final drafts due to combination of work commitments/annual leave. AR will pick up with AC. Defer to the next meeting.

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

- **Movement Group** – progressing three schemes; Bridge Street car park (Area Partnership Scheme); Maltings Lane car park/open space (THI) - both already reported on - and Golden Square bus shelter improvements (Tesco 106 money). CAAG are looking at designs for the bus shelter under item 8 but Movement Group report that schemes *are* progressing but need to match the funding

streams/grants available to ensure they can be delivered. The Barracks Group, Movement Group and Public Realm Group will need to meet to discuss the Parade Ground car park/open space/historic setting.

Cllr Taylor advised there is an all Member working group looking at a car parking strategy that will be discussing car parking charges.

MS enquired as to whether this will include the station car park – commuter/separate permit for rail users?

MS/AR also reported there had been a Gateway Station meeting that is looking again at progressing the regeneration of the west side of the line. There was a promise of funding from the Railway Heritage Trust to support or 'match fund' the re-location of the depot (capital works) but there needed to be a first phase/research and overall project plan that dealt with all the land and legal ownership issues/statutory permissions etc., i.e. a fully costed feasibility study and project plan. This could cost in excess of 40K and there were no funds immediately available; but it did represent the missing section of a long-term strategic project; to improve access/setting and interpretation of the scheduled ancient monument and station area that could be linked to the adjacent Historic Parks project; recently awarded HLF grant to develop a detailed bid.

- **Public Realm Group** – technical sub group concentrating on detailed designs for the public realm components of the THI and Bridge Street Area Partnership Schemes (as reported).
- **Barracks Group** – project group meeting to be re-convened after English Heritage/Regeneration discussions recently held in York to resolve two stumbling blocks; the NCC procurement process and EH concerns regarding their position (as guardians/owners and strategic conservation body). Need to establish how best to manage the process alongside future ownership/management and procurement issues.
- **Berwick's Future Partnership process** – PW reported that at a recent meeting of the Berwick's Future Partnership it was resolved to hold a facilitated meeting to 'take stock'; to review current membership roles and responsibilities; to improve collaboration and communication between the various project groups/partners and wider Berwick community.

## **7. CAAG website (CB).**

AC bought website CAAGberwick.org and CB in process of updating information/minutes etc. Need to ensure members provide up to date information and news for the website.

## **8. Current Planning Applications.**

- No formal applications for consideration.
- Informal consultation received for Golden Square Bus Shelter improvements (does not require planning permission). Movement Group/Public Realm Group representatives present to discuss the scheme that has been progressed through these groups. The shelter will be;
  - Single cantilever,
  - Glass panes,
  - Single curved glass roof,
  - Wooden seating benches,
  - Painted in graphite (RAL from the Public Realm Strategy),
  - Lighting with real time passenger information displays.

CAAG approves of the overall modern design but wished to enquire as to whether glass will be self-cleaning glazing and requested that no external posters/adverts/signage would be placed on the glass. AR to convey CAAG comments to highway colleagues separately.

- Berwick Breakwater. AR informed CAAG that complex engineering works underway to the breakwater (Grade II listed building). The philosophy and conservation approach was no different to any other listed structure, but the sheer scale of stone/concrete/fabric repairs that was mainly seaward side and below tide (huge areas of erosion/loss of stone and failure of earlier repairs to the base/sub structure) had made access and repair solutions difficult. AR had been in consultation with the engineers/consultants for the last couple of years and was overseeing 'like for like' repairs to ensure samples/materials and methodologies were appropriate, along with retention of historic features (like mooring rings, capstans). The lighthouse had been re-appraised recently by EH and was confirmed as being included in the listing. The repairs had to be undertaken within a narrow timeframe under licence from Natural England due to the nationally significant marine ecology/nature conservation designations. It was hoped the repairs would not only

protect historic fabric/structural integrity but also enhance access to the area.

## **9. Any Other Business.**

- i)** MS – Magistrates Court is celebrating 650<sup>th</sup> year anniversary and would be holding an open day on the 9<sup>th</sup> September.
- ii)** JR (West End) – Reported Tweedmouth heritage trail community works near the old bridge (timber bollards/paths/tree planting) had been vandalised. This was organised vandalism as equipment had been used to remove materials/trees that had been left on site. The police considered it the work of poachers clearing access to the river bank/vantage points.
- iii)** JR (CofT) – Reported 3 new benches/serpent head/town benches had been purchased that followed the public realm strategy. Lamp columns in the town centre had also been painted matt anthracite grey (as recommended in the public realm strategy) and this was getting mixed views/public response. Need to let colour settle in; it represented a change but was a first test of smaller maintenance/enhancement items in the public realm strategy.
- iv)** JR (CofT) – Raised the stocks at the side of the Town Hall (repair and who responsible). Issue has been debated at CAAG before and AR to check minutes to see who is responsible for maintenance.
- v)** AR – reported on a local government initiative looking at built conservation resources in the face of budget reductions and changes in local government. Historic Environment: Local Authority Capacity (HELAC) is a partnership initiative with English Heritage and the Local Government Group, Institute of Historic Building Conservation and the Planning Officer Society. The HELAC board selected 5 pilot study areas to develop a model of learning. Northumberland County Council is one of the pilot areas. The North of England Civic Trust is undertaking the research/recommendations and AR wanted to inform CAAG that Berwick's input and contribution to the study is slightly different to the rest of the authority in the light of current regeneration initiatives and involvement of CAAG (seen as an exemplar model of working). AR also contacted by Northampton Council's Conservation Officer for assistance in how to set up/administer a CAAG. Information on the work of the group (remit report/protocol/model of working etc.) had been passed to this officer who may want to attend a future meeting of the group.

## **10. Date of Next Meeting.**

**25<sup>th</sup> August 2011.** 9.15 a.m. Chandlery Building.

**Nb. Notes of the presentation/discussion on the Berwick Project set out in an appendix to the minutes.**

## **Berwick Project update/presentation by Sue Milner (Director of Public Health and Protection) & Martin Ryan - Project Manager.**

Sue Milner explained her role was to promote and protect the health of the community. She was also the 'sponsor', at Director level, of the Berwick Project. Martin Ryan was the project manager of individual projects.

They wanted to explain, clarify and seek views on the Berwick Project. It is as much about 'what it isn't' as much as 'what it is'.

It is really a 'transformation programme' – NCC looking closely at what it does; assessing priorities/processes against shrinking budgets; an aging population and increased demands. NCC needed to look at the reduction in resources; maintain/improve services without spending any more money.

The Berwick Project is the overall policy context (previous government's "total place agenda") that covers a geographical location that aims to pool resources, work better together and take out areas of duplication. Children's Services started the process with their 'family project'; this is confusing and got mixed up with the wider Berwick Project.

Berwick is one of 6 projects in the transformation process. This is being managed via a programme of inter-related work streams. The 2 most advanced are around families (prevention/early intervention with households that have high complex needs) and the elderly. Are looking at a new approach and way of working with local services/neighbourhood teams embedded in the community that can perform a range of functions. Berwick is a test bed/guinea pig. The aim is to establish joint responsibility for issues within their own communities.

What's not included; no intention to include or compete with regeneration; Berwick's Future Partnership or heritage projects already up and running.

Other streams relate to social intelligence; bringing together citizen concerns, provide information and confidential information (soft systems approach) and health and well-being of people in later life.

PR – can align objectives of the Berwick's Future work, Regeneration strategy with the Berwick Project – previously we did not know what the BP objectives were. Can see that the BP is seeking to address aspirational deprivation and the various cycles of education/low wage economy and breakout from family by tackling the infrastructure needs of the Berwick community.

This will supplement/complement the work of BFP/Regeneration strategy and support for small businesses by addressing aspirational needs and deficit within

the family side and the reluctance to seek further education/qualifications. By looking critically at existing services and local authority NHS/NCC service delivery and provision (and how to deal with it better) can only help with the delivery of the Regeneration Strategy.

JR (CofT) how does this relate to the Local Agency Multi Problem Solving (LMAPS) agenda on the ground?

Intention is to liaise with LMAPS and feed information into this problem solving process. Solutions/support can come back out via the LMAPS process.

Berwick's Future Partnership looking to host a facilitated event in the autumn; Berwick Project can attend be part of this event.