

## The Minutes of the Berwick-upon-Tweed Conservation Area Advisory Group Meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2010.

### In attendance:

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| <b>Margaret Shaw</b>    | Castlegate Area Resident's Association            |
| <b>Annette Reeves</b>   | NCC Conservation Officer (North)                  |
| <b>Peter Watts</b>      | The Greenses Residents' Association               |
| <b>Chris Burgess</b>    | NCC Conservation Team Manager (North) Chair       |
| <b>Peter Rutherford</b> | NCC Development Management Manager (North)        |
| <b>John Robertson</b>   | Chamber of Trade                                  |
| <b>Tim Kirton</b>       | Regeneration Team (North)                         |
| <b>John Robertson</b>   | West End Residents' Association                   |
| <b>Cllr Bowlas</b>      | Town Council                                      |
| <b>Cllr Smith</b>       | NCC Councillor and HELM (for part of the meeting) |
| <b>Philip Miller</b>    | Berwick Building Study Group                      |
| <b>Alison Cowe</b>      | Berwick Civic Society                             |

### 1. Apologies:

Mike Greener (SIT); Margaret Thomas (St B).

### 2. Minutes of the meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> February and matters arising.

The minutes were agreed. Matters arising;

**2- 4c)** CB no further news on PPS15/16 update/consultation.

**2- 8 i)** MS had received no acknowledgement of the letter sent to NCC. Upon telephoning Chief Exec's PA it had been established that the letter had been passed to Andy Dean (Head of Regeneration) for a response. If no reply received by next meeting of CAAG; a follow up letter to be sent. CAAG disappointed that not even an acknowledgement had been received. Cllr Smith requested a copy of the letter (AR to supply).

**6.** AR confirmed that CAAG comments (coordinated by PW) on the draft brief for the Public Realm Strategy had been received and discussed by the working group. PW advised he had submitted two approaches from the comments received – the first was an editorial approach with corrections/suggestions on the draft document – the other suggested a re-write and much shortened brief. The Civic Society had also submitted their own detailed comments; as had CITTASLOW. The brief was being amended and due to go before the Berwick's Future Management Group for finalisation and issue (March meeting).

**9-2.** TK advised that tenders were imminent for the Bridge Illumination project (and not out for tender as previously minuted).

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

AR confirmed that all the necessary financial information; amended delivery plans and applications for the 2 Area Partnership Schemes had been submitted to English Heritage in time for their grants panel meeting on the 4<sup>th</sup> March.

AR also progressing the THI Development Grant which was funding more detailed survey work of the critical buildings; schedules of repair and background information for the Stage II submission (due in May).

The phasing of the Area Partnership Schemes were now more aligned with the delivery of the THI (with 50% match funding from One NE) which meant the financial management; delivery costs; and provision of a dedicated post were shared across the three schemes. AR stressed that none of the projects could progress without the input and support of all three funding agencies. The schemes were closely linked; would run concurrently and relied on a single match fund that could support all three projects across a 4 year delivery period.

CB confirmed that NCC looking to backfill AR's conservation post for 4 years. All the necessary approvals for advertising the post were currently being sought. Interim arrangements were being made to provide conservation advice in the north area via the North of England Civic Trust; but this would reduce to 2 days a week from the end of March until the post could be filled.

**4. Berwick Railway Station Conservation Statement (update).**

AR had met with the architect preparing the conservation statement to finalise the philosophy of approach (particularly when it is necessary to obtain listed building consent) and agree repair guidelines on features and building fabric. The final draft will be presented to the Gateway Station Group on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> March. The statement needed to be adopted by the owners/operators and supported by the local authority. The Railway Heritage Trust (part funder of the document) was keen to promote the Berwick Statement as an exemplar for other stations.

MS reiterated the purpose was to ensure the document was flexible enough to enable the station to adapt and accommodate new technology without undermining the building and its setting. There was also an Interpretation Strategy that had been prepared previously which could be useful. MS to forward a copy to AR.

## 5. **Berwick Listed Building Surveys (update).**

AR had received formal notification on the following buildings;

**Mounting Block** West End in Tweedmouth – Listed Grade II.  
Its architectural interest represents a good example of a once common piece of street furniture and reminder of the importance of horse transport. Its historic interest is because it pre dates 1700 and is positioned in its original location.

**15-17, Woolmarket** Berwick (former Woolpack Inn) not listed.  
Too altered and lacks special interest in a national context (not mentioned as being of local interest in the appraisal).

**The Old Smokehouse** Ness Street Berwick not listed  
Conversion to domestic use has resulted in significant loss and compromised the architectural features in a national context. Is an interesting “local remnant of industrial Berwick”.

**The Brown Bear** 25 Hide Hill, initial assessment report and evaluation undertaken and submitted to Secretary of State – outcome awaited.

**Vicarage and stable block**, 129, Main Street, Spittal not listed.  
The vicarage has undergone substantial renovation in the 1950’s which severely altered the original plan form. Features lost during the C20. The stable block although retaining interesting features is not of sufficient merit or intactness to be of special interest in its own right.

The building assessments and historical analysis will increase understanding of the conservation area(s) as well as help the local recording group surveys.

CB asked for an update on the local group. PM reported that the “recording group” no longer existed – the volunteers had met and considered their remit was broader than building recording; they were now the “Berwick Buildings Study Group”. There was a mailing list and the current priority was an exhibition on mid Victorian Berwick to be held in the Main Guard in May. Volunteers were currently undertaking archival research and assisting PM with assembling material.

## 6. **Design Guides (examples and continuation of discussion; AC).**

Continuation of discussion centred on the CABE “Building for Life Criteria”; design guides previously circulated and the options and ideas that were presented by AC in her paper.

The CABE principles concerning the evaluation of the quality of new housing developments should be being used by the local planning authority. CB considered the principles relating to character/design and construction were of most interest to CAAG. These principles could be

added to CAAG's "checklist" when considering new residential development in the conservation area. They may help with the assessment of housing schemes and could be amalgamated into CAAG's checklist and overall response to applications.

As established with the examples; "design guidance" takes on many forms. It seemed from previous discussions that there were possibly enough various forms of documentation/policy guidance to assist developers and professionals but this was not always followed up. JR considered the guidance should be pitched at householders/residents; an "idiots guide" on relatively minor changes to buildings or features in the conservation area(s).

CB/AC considered the first step should be to undertake an audit – to establish what design guidance actually existed; whether it was still relevant before determining where guidance should be targeted and resourced.

**AC agreed to start an audit.** Item to be brought back to next meeting.

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

CB asked whether CAAG would like a website? Should it be associated with other community groups or separate? The Civic Society has a website and CAAG may qualify as a community group.

Other options; Town Council, Rural Voices or Berwick's Future websites. Should minutes be displayed? These are not generally available. CAAG is an independent group made up of smaller associations; elected members; officers and community groups and the minutes are circulated within these groups. CAAG members need to check with their organisations about being part of a CAAG publicly accessible website.

CB agreed to do a quick example page (on an independent server) for consideration at the next meeting.

**Action – all representatives** to check with their groups/associations about being part of a CAAG website; **CB** to prepare an example page; **groups** to send their logos to AR.

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

None for consideration.

**i) Mount Road, Tweedmouth** - AC raised the appeal for the land south of Mount Road (coal yard) which is a written rep appeal against non

determination. The site is just outside the conservation area but is of concern relating to the impact on setting of the conservation area(s). The Civic Society had responded and AC asked whether CAAG should be providing comments on this appeal. The Civic Society concerns relate to views/setting, height and mass as well as detail and materials (indicative drawings dominated by brick and painted render in bright colours).

PR confirmed the appeal against non determination related to an **outline** application submitted some time ago. All the detail would be subject to a reserved matters application and therefore, the scheme design and precise detailing (apart from access) would be considered in a reserved matters application. The Inspector would assess the outline application against the saved development plan policies; sequential test and the appropriateness of the principle of development. Urban Initiatives study had given a regeneration impetus to this site but all matters of detail would be reserved. The LPA could suggest conditions relating to some of the design principles (height, scale, mass) but CAAG should not be considering detail in any formulated response. The developer had withdrawn the affordable housing element in the scheme and so the LPA would be putting the application to the April committee with a recommendation to refuse.

CAAG could provide a response to the Inspectorate at this stage to convey there were conservation concerns on the *potential* impact of the development (height, scale, mass) on the character and setting of the adjacent conservation areas of Tweedmouth and Spittal; as well as the potential to affect views/setting from the Berwick Conservation Area.

**CB** to draft a short response for circulation. Deadline for comments to the Inspectorate for the written reps appeal is the 17<sup>th</sup> March.

**ii) Woolmarket application** - JR conveyed disappointment that the old post office building in Woolmarket (which CAAG had commented on in the past and considered an inappropriate form of development) had gone to committee for approval without further input. CAAG request that for consistency and completeness the group be kept involved in the development management process until the application is determined.

PR/AR/CB agreed to keep applications on the agenda until a decision is made. Unfortunate that in this case there had been such a big time lapse between consultation and committee resolution.

**iii) Town Hall** – AR reported that an appeal had been dismissed for further telecommunications equipment at the Town Hall (from a different operator who was using the previous approval to argue that ‘principle’ had been established). The decision was carefully argued by the Inspector

who supported the LPA refusal on the 'cumulative impact' and effect of seemingly minor interventions on historic building fabric.

## 9. Any Other Business

i) **Spittal Masterplan** – PR reported that AR/PR were due to attend a meeting in Spittal to discuss the commissioning of a piece of work under the “Rural Masterplanning Fund” from the Homes and Communities Agency. This was a collaborative regeneration/housing/strategic planning initiative with input from development management and conservation. CAAG will be kept informed. PR/AR will represent the north area.

ii) **The Playhouse** – PR reported the scaffolding had been removed from the exterior of the building which was being assessed as a dangerous structure. It had suffered frost damage (particularly the roof) with a lot of friable/falling masonry. Edwin Thompson’s building surveyors were liaising with Building Control to assess the extent of damage and extent of structural decay.

iii) **Town Centre Vacancy** – JR had undertaken a quick assessment and established the town had a 7% vacancy rate which was not too bad given the current economic climate. Concern was for first floor vacancy. The THI and Area Partnership Schemes would hopefully address some repair issues and investment in the heritage asset – but buildings such as Ford Bakery was in need of repair and outside the current schemes. PR/AR had identified a much larger area for intervention – but this would not have received external funding support. It was hoped there would be opportunity to extend the repair programme following the delivery and implementation of the current schemes.

iv) **Asda/Co-Op, Tweedmouth** – Cllr Bowlas concerned about the size of the replacement signage on the old Co-Op (now Asda) this was visible for some distance (across from the Berwick Conservation Area). Need to check the application status of the new signage.

v) **Berwick’s Future Project Groups** – TK reported that there had been inaugural meetings of 3 project groups from Berwick’s Future;

- Public Realm
- Barrack’s Future
- Movement Strategy

There were a lot of overlaps between the groups (particularly public realm and movement) as well as links with the THI and AP Schemes. Some CAAG representatives were also on the project groups. MS also advised that the Station Gateway group needed to feed into the Movement

Strategy as there were advanced plans and previous studies on car parking at the station and relocation of the goods yard. It was important this work was not overlooked or unnecessarily repeated (particularly where it related to sensitive archaeology or previously funded designs and improvement schemes). CB suggested having a regular item on the agenda.

**Agreed** – Berwick’s Future Projects to be a standard item to enable representatives to report back to CAAG.

**vi)** CB apologised for forgetting to welcome Cllr Bowlas to the meeting and welcomed him as the new Town Council rep.

**10. Date of Next Meeting.**

**13<sup>th</sup> April** (please note this is changed from the 6<sup>th</sup> April).  
Venue to be confirmed.