

The Minutes of the Berwick-upon-Tweed Conservation Area Advisory Group Meeting on 27th May 2011.

In attendance:

Margaret Shaw	CARA (Chair for this meeting)
Annette Reeves	NCC Conservation Officer (North)
Peter Watts	The Greenses Residents' Association
Tim Kirton	Regeneration Team (North)
Philip Miller	Building Study Group
Margaret Thomas	St Boisil's Resident's Association
Alison Cowe	Berwick Civic Society
Peter Rutherford	NCC Development Management Manager (North)
Cllr John Taylor	Chair of North Area Planning Committee
David Rowlinson	NCC Planning Strategy (presentation on Spittal and Tweedmouth Masterplan Study)

1. Apologies:

Chris Burgess (NCC and Chair); John Robertson (WE); Cllr Bowlas (Town Council).

David Rowlinson gave a presentation on the Spittal and Tweedmouth Masterplan Study consultation document. (see item 6).

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 21st April and matters arising.

The minutes were agreed.

Matters arising;

- i) AC reported the Civic Society had met with the owners of the Leaping Salmon to ask if the stone plaque could be improved (by highlighting the lettering). AC had discussed with AR who confirmed the painting of the individual letters would not attract any local authority action. AR advised CAAG the direct community approach (in this particular case) had resulted in a good outcome that would not have been achieved through enforcement action. The Civic Society was thanked for their assistance.
- ii) The Vice Chair (MS) letter sent in April (as agreed at the March meeting) to the Regeneration North Area Manager had received no acknowledgement or formal response. CAAG were disappointed to note no response had been received by the May meeting. TK confirmed that a response was in preparation.
- iii) AR advised that Lynne Walker from the Council for British Archaeology had spent a day in Berwick with AR visiting Pier Road

Maltings and Dewar's Lane Granary. LW would be including both conversion schemes in a forthcoming joint English Heritage and Council for British Archaeology publication on the re-use of industrial buildings. LW had provided consultee comments on Pier Road Maltings at application stage and had used it as an exemplar in lectures on how to approach conversion. She rarely got the opportunity to visit post/mid conversion and was interested in progress. In spite of some minor revisions and ongoing monitoring of compliance with conditions; LW considered it a successful conversion scheme that she was happy to promote in the national publication as an exemplar.

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

THI - AR progressing Year 2 Action Plan and anticipated programme of work for the critical building repair schedules. Tenders are currently being sought for one of the critical buildings following approval of the schedule of works. More building enquiries were coming forward for year 2 within the THI (West Street area and Marygate) and Bridge Street/Castlegate schemes following the exhibition in the Granary in April and after the Civic Society Talk on the 11th May. AR in consultation with the owners of the former Happit Store listed building (being refurbished at first floor for residential) to improve the overall shop frontage that has an intact classical first floor façade. Archive photographs exist of the building from 1890 as well as the 1950's refurbished/altered frontage and AR encouraging owners to apply for grant to improve the commercial shop frontage (currently vacant) and first floor windows.

Area Partnership Schemes – Bridge Street; 1 scheme complete; Granary Guest House contract to be completed by the end of July. Third application being progressed to contract for works to commence in the summer. 2 more applications expected and AR arranging to meet with other owners/potential applicants following Civic Society talk. Forms and guidance notes recently sent out.

Castlegate; 1 application still being finalised following receipt of more information but hoping to go to contract in the near future. AR meeting with new owners of 2 recently sold commercial premises and pursuing several other potential grant applications. In spite of promising discussions and some quotations being sought; owners/tenants reluctant to formally apply for grant assistance.

Public Realm (Maltings and Bridge Street car parks); development management design team meetings recently held to progress detailed designs to application/consultation stage. The consultants aim to

programme the enhancements across an 18 months period, for commencement at end of Year 2, completion at the start of Year 3.

4. Berwick Listed Building Surveys.

EH are concluding the Berwick surveys and some decisions/building assessment outcomes still awaited. AR included information on the 'live' system with website addresses in the previous minutes and prepared a short news item for the CAAG website.

5. Design Guides – draft leaflets (AC).

Defer to next meeting.

6. Spittal Point Masterplan Study (presentation of consultation document by David Rowlinson, NCC).

DR presented the draft document and talked around a number of exhibition boards that contained the key summary information and priority sites within the study area. The consultation was scheduled to continue in the Chandlery (2-7 p.m. for wider public consultation). DR explained a working group of stakeholders, involving some of the local community had been working with the consultants to produce the draft document. It was not a blueprint but contained a number of options and there were choices to be made. It was important for CAAG and local stakeholders to contribute to the study at this important stage.

Question and answer session produced the following discussion topics:

- PW – what is happening to the One Northeast sites purchased for regeneration purposes?
- DR – it is ultimately a Treasury decision; One NE does not know.
- PW – can CAAG influence or input to the decision regarding the sale or transfer of assets?
- DR – an adopted LDF might help and EAAAP, as this pulls together all the issues and strategies, possible autumn consultation on the EAAAP.
- PR – the market has stalled and rather than try to influence the sale or retention of bought sites need to look at it the other way round; see it as an opportunity to get the strategy/masterplan and AAP right. The EAAAP has to wait for the core strategy, which is being accelerated; need the policy framework and weight behind it to make the difficult decisions.
- DR – need to develop the spatial strategy; what is Berwick? Where is Berwick? This filters down to the EAAAP; the core document has

to relate to the high level strategy of the Council otherwise it will not be as robust or capable of delivering what Berwick wants.

- MT – the Masterplan says it has referred to the Conservation Appraisals and fed this into the Masterplan; but shows the Blending and Coating works as 4 storey buildings, which is contrary to the Appraisals.
- DR – can revisit and look at scale/massing/height; study says 3-4 storeys but can review this.
- MT – also concerned about flood risk and lack of insurance on properties within a flood risk area.
- DR – study is aware of the Shoreline Management Plan; Tweed Estuary Study and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment level 2 as the basis for introducing flood protection measures. DR not aware of the insurance issue.
- PR – PPS25 contains sequential tests for areas of flood risk; talks of mitigation, does not say ‘no’ to development but suggests a range of mitigation measures.
- DR – not ruled out development without a full flood risk assessment (Spittal Point case where could agree measures).
- AC – community concern about environment/landscape and coast, why is there a bias on residential and lack of commercial options? Is this because the study is being funded by the Homes and Communities Agency?
- DR – HCA not leading us to houses but gave a free hand based on a ‘low, medium and high’ assessment of viable options.
- PR – we are planning for a mixed economy within a changing political landscape; in forward planning work how do you make the policy robust enough whilst being flexible to respond to changes or do you make it restrictive? Challenge is to produce a framework that responds to Government, which is housing led economic growth, but also supports levels of intervention from the public sector (i.e. One NE purchased sites).
- MT – small business shown to be redeveloped; their loss would be felt in the local community; they represent cheap rental premises and locally accessible facilities.
- DR – the uses are not the primary purposes for those buildings; they are left over from past industries and not fit for purpose; ‘no change’ is an option if this is wanted but are the shells of buildings going to survive the next 100 years; no one is building commercial premises.

The discussion concluded and David was thanked for a useful presentation. Some community groups/members of CAAG will be providing their own consultation responses to DR separately (very tight timetable for consultation period to respond to HCA programme) and AR will provide CAAG minutes as part of the consultation response.

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

- Barracks Group – project group meeting scheduled for July, brief out to tender.
- Public Realm Group – concentrating on detailed designs for the public realm components of the THI and Bridge Street Area Partnership Schemes.
- Movement Group – looking to implement Golden Square bus shelter improvements (XXXXXXXXXX) and a sub 'signage group' had met to discuss signage from the A1 and internal car park signs. PR/AR concerned that designs not come before CAAG. Need to ensure any street furniture/materials/signage etc., complies with the Public Realm Strategy. AC concerned also, as during Tesco Inquiry much was made of green travel and provision of bus shelters that showed real time information. Were the proposals including real time information? TK to check and confirmed Wendy Scott as lead of Public Realm group had been consulted. AR reiterated need to address and follow the strategy document and to consult with CAAG. Common issues were emerging with NCC highway operations pursuing designs/maintenance works within the public realm that did not follow the adopted strategies or overall vision. Cllr Taylor offered to assist with calling a meeting of head of highways; PR/AR to ensure the conservation area scheme money and 106 monies could be used to maximum affect. NCC budget being used to mend potholes/winter damage but if some of this could be added to the conservation/partnership funding it would address CAAG's concerns.

8. CAAG website (CB).

CB to be provided with all minutes and any other news items for inclusion on the website. It is everyone's responsibility to provide information. AR written an article recently for Archaeology in Northumberland and this could be put on the website.

9. Current Planning Applications.

None for consideration.

10. Any Other Business.

- i) AC formally thanked AR and PM for their joint talk to the Civic Society which was very well received.

- ii) AC enquired about condition of little mortuary building on the quayside. PR previously mentioned to owner's agent but AR will write to agent expressing conservation concern regarding its condition.
- iii) AC consultation on the SHLAAR is being held in Alnwick. Could it be held in Berwick? Difficult for local councillors and community to comment. The SHLAAR is an assessment of housing land supply/methodology not a statement of policy but policy team do look at it. Suggestion that Civic Society and AR (on behalf of CAAG) write a letter to ask if CAAG can have a presentation or input.
- iv) Cllr Taylor conveyed that he had enjoyed attending the meeting and could see the interest and passion that local groups had for the conservation areas. He would not be able to attend every meeting but was very interested and offered to help any way he could to promote the work in Berwick.
- v) MS Gateway Station meeting has been requested to discuss the railyard depot. AR to brief MS after the meeting.

11. Date of Next Meeting.

AR to agree a programme of dates until the end of the calendar year with the Town Council and will circulate these separately to CAAG members.

Town Council thanked for the use of the premises and facilities.