

The Minutes of the Berwick-upon-Tweed Conservation Area Advisory Group Meeting on 24th November 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
Cllr Alan Bowlas	Town Council
Philip Miller	Building Study Group
John Robertson	West End Residents' Association
Cllr John Taylor	Chair of North Area Planning Committee
Tim Kirton	NCC Regeneration (North)
Bryony Onciul	Spittal Improvement Trust

1. Apologies:

Peter Rutherford, Margaret Thomas, Dorothy Slater, Wendy Ross Smith.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 27th October and matters arising.

The minutes were agreed. Matters arising;

1. AR had circulated separately the email response from Mike Scott (Head of Sustainable Transport) to CAAG's letter of concern regarding strategic transport issues in Berwick.

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

THI – The approved scheme and contract for 39 Marygate is scheduled to commence in January (weather permitting). West Street smaller schemes are continuing as part of new fit outs/recent changes in tenancies. A large application is expected for the range of vacant buildings to the rear of the former Army Surplus Store (recently let to a new tenant).

Area Partnership Schemes – Bridge Street: Café Curio contracted works commenced mid November, likely to be a 12 week contract. The steady continuation of works and contractors on site following the 3 recently completed projects is having a positive effect as more enquiries are being followed up.

An application has been submitted for Magna Tandoori; a substantial scheme seeking to address significant building repairs to the roof; chimneys; stonework; leadwork; guttering; joinery repairs to the principal

frontage and 44 no windows. This is a target building within the original bid submission and revised Delivery Plan that will benefit the whole of Bridge Street; the Sallyport return and rear elevation that now forms part of the courtyard to Dewar's Lane Granary and visible from the newly created access from the Walls. It is hoped to progress this application (with EH approval) for commencement of works in February/March.

Further applications are likely to be submitted for Barrels PH that falls within the Area Partnership Scheme and THI boundary; another 'impact' building that would have cumulative effect and improvement to townscape.

Other recent enquiries include Backpackers (another substantial building) and smaller properties adjacent.

Castlegate; Works now completed to 14 Castlegate (Berwick Wedding Parlour). The joinery work; shop front improvements (that follow the Shopfront Design Guide) have been undertaken to a high standard. This has produced a number of other enquiries and anticipated applications.

71 Castlegate approved and contracted on. This includes shop front improvements and windows. Works will commence in the New Year.

An application is also being progressed for the Free Trade (immediately adjoining 71) as part of a cohesive repair and treatment of windows and building fabric. Although 2 small grant schemes the cumulative effect will be noticeable and of benefit to Castlegate. It is hoped buildings adjacent will also join the scheme ('Stitch in Time') as these businesses have commented on the newly refurbished Wedding Parlour shop frontage.

Application also expected for 4-6 Castlegate; 85 Castlegate (planning approval sought and granted for improved shop front); 44 Castlegate (B&B/Barbers shop) and potentially 26-28 Castlegate (the Former Fancy Dress Hire Shop) that has been purchased for a new business/tenant.

Public Realm (Maltings and Bridge Street car parks) progress has stalled following the various consultation meetings. Their needs to be technical support, QS costings and buy in from NCC Highways and Rob Horne (Regeneration Manager) has prepared a report for SMT consideration. Would look to deliver Bridge Street at start of Year 3 and Maltings at the end of Year 3 (following completion of the building project at the junction of Marygate/Maltings Lane), as this will be temporarily closed.

Complementary Initiatives – following the success of the Year 1 initiatives and 'programme launch' that included the Changemaker Project with Elizabeth Russell and her work with school children; the artist publication of photographs/poems; the Building Study Group recording

project and design work for the public realm, AR is developing further ideas for a 'mid way' event and continuation of various training initiatives.

At the time of the Changemaker project AR had spoken with the North of England Civic Trust as part of their 'skills training' work. The NECT did not recruit a Changemaker advocate at this stage because they were developing their own, broader initiative and bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for heritage skills training with universities/colleges. NECT received a stage 1 pass and are now developing a Stage 2 bid that includes a wide range of academic and practical conservation learning activities with Newcastle University. They recruited a planning graduate from Newcastle University to assist with this particular project (who turns out to be a fellow graduate/friend of Elizabeth Russell) who is aware of Elizabeth's thesis and THI project with Berwick Middle School.

NECT have asked AR (as part of the training element in the Berwick THI) to provide mentoring and suitable heritage projects for small groups of students. This link and connection to regional skills training and university undergraduates with a partner like NECT would continue the Berwick work started with school children; provide real case studies and research opportunities for young people interested in the heritage sector. The NECT has developed a full activity plan for HLF consideration in December. HLF will make a decision by March 2012 and so any future projects and work with students as part of the NECT programme would commence in Year 3 of the THI.

AR is also developing a further artist led event with Jacob Polley, (the writer/poet who contributed to the Hometown Dark publication) for Year 3 of the THI; possibly around an art installation/animated event to bring the schemes to life; that could form part of 'heritage doors open' or other local film festival/art based events.

PM also conveyed the Building Study group's work on Bridge Street is nearly complete and they were looking to publish. AR will be able to support a small publication of this body of work as part of the Berwick Historic Area Schemes/THI complementary initiatives.

4. Berwick Building Surveys (local list).

CB/AR been discussing how to progress a project; possibly with support for a student placement to collate the data as well as make bids to facilitate the community consultation process. Newcastle University send out forms every year to stakeholders/partners who may be able to support a student project. It is not too late to put in a project outline. BO also has links (via her own students/university contacts) and has also volunteered to assist with developing the community consultation.

CB been investigating links to the Local Development Framework and statutory plan making process regarding appropriate policies to give 'local lists' weight but is conscious of the proposed changes in the National Planning Policy Framework discussed at a special meeting of CAAG. CB/AR to continue to research this issue and facilitate a Berwick initiative.

5. Design Guides – draft leaflets (AC).

AC not present but has advised CB she is waiting for suitable images for the Mortar leaflet. AR will provide abstract images as conveyed previously and has prepared a case study on this topic (see item 8).

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

- **Movement Group** – continuing to work through the Buchannan report.
- **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** – no further updates.
- **Berwick's Future Partnership process** – PW reported that at a recent meeting of the Berwick's Future Partnership it was resolved to continue with the partnership; it is a 20 year programme that must continue. Agreed 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. It needs a joint approach.
- **World Heritage Status seminar** – MS reported on this recent day seminar/workshop that included speakers from English Heritage; Edinburgh WHS as well as local advocates; Chris Burgess and Philip Miller. This event was attended by 65 people and was put on and funded by local people; CITTASLOW Berwick, CARA, Chamber of Trade and support from JusRol. The ideas and conclusions came from the local community and it was important to recognise the journey and achievements since the last conference, rather than the pursuit of the 'badge' that appeared to be unattainable. The process and criteria had become more complex since the original launch with better examples of 'walled towns' and it was concluded that WHS is a 'state of mind'. Berwick will be seeking to join the World Walled Town Federation (CB considered there could be NCC Conservation Team and Town Council support

to assist with the subscription). MS disappointed that only Cllr Pat Scott had attended from the County Council. Everyone who attended however, considered the conference worthwhile and perhaps there is scope to hold an annual event with a heritage focus. The notes/workshop conclusions produced on the day had been circulated.

7. CAAG website (CB).

The Url site had been set up. Minutes and CAAG response on the NPPF consultation had been posted. CB still looking for news items. Will put the WHS information/conclusions on the news page. Will also provide a link to the Berwick KOSB on line campaign to keep the colours in Berwick.

8. Current Planning Applications.

- **Listed Building Case Study** – Masonry (AR).

AR presented a recent case that involved the complete removal of external render and application of lime based render of a Grade II listed building in Wallace Green. AR had the owner's permission to discuss this case because the application, the justification for the work and solutions arrived at involved a complete understanding of the internal and external fabric of the building and its dramatic repair issues caused by damp and water ingress. AR been working with the owners since they purchased the building and explained "cause, effect and remedy" and where levels of intervention and need for listed building consent were required.

The 'cause' of the problem stemmed from a complete and systematic sealing of both the external and internal fabric with cement based products and paint sealants; blocking of all vents and fireplaces/chimneys/flues; layers of plastic sheeting and plasterboard combinations internally and the introduction of numerous unventilated shower rooms that put a lot more moisture and condensation into the building. This had occurred over a long period of time and the 'effect' of all this trapped water/moisture caused wet and dry rot; the building simply could not 'breathe'. The building needed to be carefully stripped back of all its layers to allow it to dry out. A scientific analysis of the extent of the problem, together with an appropriate 'remedy' was also required for the listed building application. This was supplied by the Scottish Lime Centre who needed to specify the correct mix, depth and final finish over the top of the exposed brick work (to the depth of the stone quoins, plinth and window surrounds). This case study could be written up as an example for the Mortar leaflet.

9. Any Other Business.

- i) Cllr T – is attending a conference on the Localism Bill. Will report back to CAAG at the next meeting as well as provide an update on the new Neighbourhood Planning Scheme; surprised Berwick did not bid for this along with other Parishes.
- ii) CB – recruited 2 new conservation officers to replace Peter Rogers and backfill AR's post. Both will be starting in January.
- iii) PW – is speaking at a community planning event on the 9th December in Newcastle at the request of the North East Historic Environment Forum and EH. PW talk focusing on neighbourhood planning and link to regeneration and local priorities and will include the work of Berwick Community Development Trust and CAAG.

9. Date of Next Meeting.

The meeting had been previously set for 22nd December and at the Chair's request this has been brought forward to **Thursday 15th December.**

Mince pies and fizz to be provided!