

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

In attendance:

Chris Burgess	NCC Conservation Manager (Chair)
Annette Reeves	NCC Conservation Officer (North)
Peter Watts	The Greenses Residents' Association
Margaret Thomas	St. Boisil's Residents' Association
Wendy Ross-Smith	Chamber of Trade
Alison Cowe	Civic Society

1. Apologies:

Philip Miller, John Robertson, Alan Bowlas, Peter Rutherford, Cllr John Taylor, Margaret Shaw, Dorothy Slater, Tim Kirton (written update provided to the meeting from Rob Horne).

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 29th September and matters arising.

The minutes were agreed. Matters arising;

1. CB had spoken to Simon Rudman (NCC Highways) concerning issue raised under item 9 iii) - heavy goods vehicles crossing and damaging the Old Bridge. NCC advise the 7 ½ ton weight limit is not enforceable. The matter needs to be considered as part of the Movement Strategy in relation to directional signage/keeping vehicles from crossing the bridge in the first place. The Movement Group needs to take this forward as part of the wider strategy and vision for Berwick. NCC acknowledges the high cost of repairs. CAAG are concerned a significant heritage asset is under threat and its loss would be far greater than a few additional signs in the conservation area.
2. PW had not provided a summary of the procurement process in relation to the Barracks (item 6), but could update under main item.
3. MS (not present) confirmed to AR the letter from CAAG had been finalised and sent to NCC Chief Executive.

3. Draft NPPF (extra meeting; CAAG consultation response).

An extra meeting of CAAG was held on the 12th October to discuss the National Planning Policy Framework consultation document and associated papers to enable CAAG to respond before the deadline (17th October). CB/AR/AC facilitated the discussion with Nick Best who had coordinated the county's response. The meeting was well attended by representatives across the various heritage/planning sectors including

elected Members, Officers and community groups. There was a consensus response emerging in relation to common themes, ambiguities and concern for how the emphasis on sustainable development could be interpreted (without supporting guidance and definitions). Many other organisations and professional bodies were conveying similar messages.

CB coordinated the notes/comments and CAAG response in the form of a letter (circulated to all CAAG members) rather than complete the on-line questionnaire. The letter was sent (and acknowledged) by the due deadline. CAAG consultation response to be put on the website.

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

THI – The HLF had appointed a monitor who had visited Berwick on the 14th October. This is standard practice for HLF schemes; possibly triggered by HLF's recent approval of the first application in the THI. The role of the monitor is to ensure all financial procedures, processes and project management systems are in place; to ensure the money is drawn down and spent in accordance with HLF guidelines. The Berwick THI monitor is an accountant with project management skills, a 'critical friend' and advisor to the project. He was not familiar with the strategic approach to the heritage led regeneration schemes and overlapping conservation initiatives that had resulted in three externally funded schemes being delivered simultaneously (THI and 2 AP Schemes) with all match funding in place. AR and Iain Ogilvie spent the day conveying how the schemes were being administered, the processes Iain's team had set up (specific to Berwick) as well as showing him the scheme boundaries/relationships and target buildings (critical and priority).

Feedback received; the Berwick THI is more advanced than other THI's he is monitoring; the critical and priority buildings are large scale 'problem buildings' and therefore we are operating a 'high risk' strategy that is brave but necessary; the connection with the smaller scale AP Schemes is vital to the support and success of the THI. It is anticipated there will be regular meetings (possibly quarterly) as the THI progresses.

The approved scheme and contract for 39 Marygate is unlikely to commence until January (weather permitting) as NCC Highways will not permit a road closure (Eastern Lane) for scaffolding and equipment until after the festive period, the car park and access is vital to the town.

Other smaller schemes/potential projects are being discussed and advanced in West Street but no further THI applications at this stage. Some recent changes to tenancies/retail occupants have produced improvements to some of the smaller shop units that have sought advice

but not pursued grants. These are largely internal fit outs and minor changes to signage/livery/maintenance of shop fronts; although AR still discussing overall repairs/improvements with building owners.

Area Partnership Schemes – Bridge Street; 26 Bridge Street had been completed. AR advised this was a good example of a subtle building repair (roof, chimney's, stonework, windows/joinery and lead work) that once again set the conservation standard for the overall scheme. It was particularly noticeable from the entrance to Bridge Street car park and was an 'impact building' on the delivery plan. Part of the scheme had been to remove unsightly/defunct wires and old electrical cables. The owners were undertaking further works to the property and had received positive feedback. It was hoped adjacent buildings would apply to the scheme to build up a critical mass of repaired and improved buildings.

Café Curio had been contracted on and works were due to commence the second week of November. It was good to have a steady run of building projects and repairs in progress. Other potential applications were still being discussed in Bridge Street as reported previously.

Castlegate; Works now commenced on shopfront improvements to all joinery and leadwork repairs on 14 Castlegate (Berwick Wedding Parlour). AR is keen for a completed scheme in Castlegate, as this will stimulate interest and more enquiries. WRS conveyed that at a recent Wedding Fair event the Castlegate scheme was mentioned and through Chamber of Trade hopefully more publicity will come from the scheme.

71 Castlegate is soon to be contracted on and other potential applications are still being progressed with AR as reported previously.

Public Realm (Maltings and Bridge Street car parks) progress has stalled slightly following the various consultation meetings. There needs to be technical support, QS costings and buy in from NCC Highways.

AR recently met with consultants to go through the designs, as well as identify HLF/EH eligible works. Rob Horne (Regeneration Manager) is currently preparing a Senior Management Report (SMT) seeking match funding and further design input.

Detailed costings showing all eligible and non eligible works in the public realm (with a phased programme) were vital before the schemes could be submitted to HLF/EH for approval. Projected delivery of Bridge Street would be the start of Year 3; the 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) as well as statutory approvals from the LPA and funders.

5. **Berwick Building Surveys (local list).**

There is an aspiration to have a wider local list as reported previously. CB been investigating with Policy team (John Bell) re; linking local lists to the current planning policy framework through the LDF work. JB advises that PPS12 sec 6.3 is pertinent and means 'non government organisations' like CAAG can prepare 'local lists' and feed this into the LDF. CB considers a project group would need to be set up to take it forward. AC confirmed the Civic Society would be interested as well as potentially the Building Study Group. As reported previously CB looking to facilitate a process and prepare a brief so that a written model can be consistently used across the county. Concern the Draft NPPF does not include local lists but agreed to keep this as a regular CAAG agenda item.

6. **Design Guides – draft leaflets (AC).**

AC has prepared an example leaflet (Masonry) with images taken from the Character Appraisals. This needs to be formatted as the text and images may or may not directly correlate. The images used in the appraisals convey many overlapping characteristics/styling/features. There is scope for more examples. AR may be able to assist; as there is current work in progress that shows examples of good and bad masonry/render repairs and techniques. If used in the abstract (close up showing textures/finishes etc.) this should not 'identify' any particular building. CB will look at formatting. AR to check leaflet/provide more images.

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

- **Movement Group** – Rob Horne recently met with County Highways concerning the Local Transport Plan and flagged up a potential new coach parking site, although this is in the very early stages of discussion and is NOT finalised as incorrectly reported in the local press recently.
- **Public Realm Group** – concentrating on the Bridge Street and Maltings Lane schemes (as reported at 4).
- **Barracks Group** – still ongoing with Place First to resolve the procurement issues. English Heritage need to get the support of their committees for the new procurement procedure and Catherine Dewar is leading on this.
- **Kwik Save site** – Meeting requested with the college on the possibilities of the site being used for a college development, awaiting their response. Homes and Communities Agency own the

site (transferred from One Northeast). Education is identified as a real need linked to economic regeneration. CB wishes to stress that if the existing sub structure is not disturbed and is utilised for any redevelopment/new build to accommodate a different building design it removes the need for expensive archaeology.

- **Spittal and Tweedmouth Masterplan** – the final report has been produced for signing off. There was concern this had not been sent to local groups. CB/AR confirmed the final document had addressed the consultation comments provided by all principal stakeholders and wider community.
- **Royal Border Bridge** – original contractor is now unavailable to do the repair works. Regeneration is in negotiation with two contractors who are interested in taking over the repairs. Concern this work (as reported in the press) involves changes to the installation and fixings (*over* the bridge as opposed to *under* the bridge?) and may breach the listed building consent obtained.

8. **CAAG website (CB).**

CB to update website; August and September minutes and CAAG response to the NPPF need to be put on. Eventually, the design guides will go on the website. AC suggested putting a link to Alec Clifton Taylor's video/programme on Berwick as he highlights local masonry and unusual ornate carved stonework.

9. **Current Planning Applications.**

- Outline application for 71 residential units and new access road; Old Coal Yard site, Tweedmouth.

Comments on the submitted outline scheme have been sent to the case officer separately.

- AC enquired as to whether CB/AR had discussed CAAG being involved in commenting on listed building applications as raised under AOB previously. CB confirmed that AR had expressed professional concerns as well as there being a capacity issue regarding the number of listed building applications received. This had been discussed previously during the evolution of CAAG's remit report and terms of reference. However, CB/AR concluded different types of listed building application(s); the approach to assessment; steps and outcome could be used as an example and learning opportunity. AR to present a recent listed building case (with the owner's permission) to the next CAAG meeting.

10. Any Other Business.

- i)** PW – advised he was gradually withdrawing from various committees/organisations and was ‘retiring’. He would look to provide replacement representatives for both the Community Trust and The Greenses’ Resident’s Association for CAAG.
- ii)** AR – EH publications just received on ‘Stopping the Rot’ a guide to enforcement action to save historic buildings and ‘Vacant Historic Buildings’ an owners guide to temporary uses, maintenance and monitoring. These were particularly useful for recent enforcement cases currently being investigated. CB to provide link on CAAG website to EH and HELM website where the documents can be downloaded.
- iii)** AC – Concern on recent works in land adjacent to Tintagel House and THI area. Fencing/chain link and signage/CCTV cameras installed. It appears to be a secure car park on land that has an extant permission for residential development. Have there been any breaches of planning control? AR to formally raise issue with planning/enforcement on behalf of CAAG.
- iv)** AC – recent lighting on the Leaping Salmon is highly visible and is a very bright white light visible from some distance. Has this got consent as part of their recent works? AR to raise with planning/enforcement.
- v)** MT – solar panels – do they require conservation area consent? AR advised can only control if proposed on a listed building. The tension between green energy and historic conservation is a growing one and new technology is trying to address this. CB advised many of the providers avoid Berwick because they need south facing roof planes. On Holy Island solar panels (on every household) was resisted because they opted instead for a single wind turbine. This had less impact on the historic and natural environment.

10. Date of Next Meeting.

24th November 2011. 9.15 a.m. Chandlery Building.