

## **WIRRAL COUNCIL**

**PLANNING COMMITTEE – 21 MAY 2009**

**ECONOMY AND REGENERATION OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –  
15<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2009**

### **REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF TECHNICAL SERVICES**

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#### **CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN BIDSTON VILLAGE CONSERVATION AREA**

##### **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1.1 Donald Insall and Associates were appointed in March 2007 to carry out appraisals and management plans for sixteen Conservation Areas in the Wirral. This report covers Bidston Village. The Appraisal and Management Plan are attached.

##### **2. THE APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN**

2.1 Conservation Area Appraisals have been promoted by English Heritage as useful documents for the understanding of the significance, character and appearance of such areas. Management Plans are intended to follow on from appraisals to provide a focus for action and management of conservation areas.

2.2 Conservation Areas were included in the BVPI indicators (219a, b, and c) when the work was commissioned. For the current year BVPI 219c (the percentage of conservation areas with management plans) has been dispensed with, and in future years the indicators 219a and b (number of conservation areas and percentage with character appraisals), will no longer be used as assessments of Local Authority performance. Notwithstanding this, the Council is committed to conserving the Borough's natural and built heritage; and increasing civic pride and public participation, through its Corporate Objectives.

2.3 The Conservation Area Appraisals have been carried out in accordance with the advice published by English Heritage (Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals - February 2006). In accordance with the guidelines, the following framework has been generally used as the basis of the analysis:-

- Location and population
- Origins and development of the settlement
- Prevailing or former uses and their influence on plan form or building type
- Archaeological significance
- Architectural and historic qualities of buildings
- Contribution made by key unlisted buildings
- Character and relationship of spaces
- Prevalent and traditional building materials
- Local details
- Contribution made by green spaces, trees, hedges, etc
- Setting of the Conservation Area and its relationship with the surrounding landscape
- Extent of loss, intrusion or damage
- Existence of any neutral areas

- 2.4 The Appraisal will act as an audit of the area and give residents, applicants, and others an understanding of the special qualities of the conservation area and any negative factors. The Appraisal, as an audit of the Conservation Area, should be adopted by the Council and used as a material consideration in determining any planning applications within or affecting the setting of the conservation area.
- 2.5 Management Plans, on the other hand, are relatively rare and English Heritage advice more amorphous. (Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas – February 2006) The management plan has required some thought to give it structure. At this stage of the process the Management Plan is an agenda for future action and consideration. This part of the document relies on the analysis contained in the appraisal to set out the issues and negative factors affecting both the private and public realm. As such it is the first stage in a management plan process which will refine the plan through further consultation, joint officer working and budgetary request.
- 2.6 Most of the Appraisals have been discussed with the local Conservation Area Advisory Committees in order for local residents and others to give their perspectives on the areas and contribute to the analysis. To have real weight, Management Plans need to be discussed not only with local groups but also corporately in terms of policy and enhancement action having regard to the resources available. These first essays will act as an agenda for detailed policy development for DC purposes; a yardstick for members of the public to comment on planning applications; a stimulus to corporate working in regard to the management of the public realm; and a “wish list” for its enhancement.

### **3. BIDSTON VILLAGE**

- 3.1 The following is a list of features and information that are part of the Conservation Area’s special character:
- Historic village with pre medieval origins.
  - Historic farmstead settlement dating to 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century
  - Central Church rebuilt in twelfth century, tower dating to 1520, altered 1856 with windows by Morris and Co (1912), H. Hughes.
  - Bidston Hall and gates; a late C16-early C17 re-building of an earlier structure
  - Good range of historic agricultural buildings and layouts; barns, cow byres, pig styes, stables
  - Open land remains at the centre of the village.
  - Interesting mix of building scale, height and size with irregular fenestration patterns
  - Buff local sandstone, welsh slate and stone slate roofs
  - Rare cruck frame construction survives
  - Stone mullioned windows, coped gables, chimneys
  - Well presented gardens, local sandstone boundary walls, gate posts.
  - Visible natural bedrock
  - Vertical boarded doors
  - Stone cobbled, setts, flagged yards

#### **Management Issues**

- 3.2 The character of Bidston Village has been progressively affected by the proximity of development to what was once a rural village. The historic plans in Appendix F show that from the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup>/ 20<sup>th</sup> century the original village had been infiltrated by suburban development originally along School Lane and

then along Lennox Lane. Despite this the village remained as a pleasant highlight on the road between Birkenhead to Moreton and Hoylake beyond. In the 60s/70s local authority housing (now called Beechwood) constructed at the base of Bidston Hill connected to Bidston Village Road via Fender Way. With the introduction of the motorway connecting through to Liverpool, the village was by-passed from its original origins and destinations but connected to adjoining and expanding housing areas. The village now suffers from constant traffic and speeding incidents along a serpentine route with obscure accesses. The removal of through traffic seems unlikely on grounds of accident rate and expense but does require management. Approaches to the road safety section of the Traffic Management Division have indicated that a flashing go slow sign within the village towards the bend in Bidston Village Road by Church Farm may be appropriate. However, on accident rate it is not a funding priority and the CAAC may wish to pursue this proposal through the local Area Forum.

- 3.3 The retention of open spaces within and adjoining the village is important to its character. The green spaces within the setting of Bidston Hall are protected as urban green space with those toward Bidston Hill also being areas of nature conservation, and special landscape value. However, the boundaries of the Interim Housing Policy include most of the village within the area as a primarily residential area and thus the interstitial spaces and gardens depend for their protection on the impact of any development on the character and appearance of the conservation area. The summary of character identifies open land at the centre of the village and the appraisal indicates the importance of open land in Section 6.5 – Loss and Development Pressure. In recognition of the importance of the character of open spaces around the former farm buildings the paddock at the converted barns for Bidston Hall Farm has been retained as a single open space as required under the planning permission and enforcement action taken to secure the removal of fencing to create separate gardens. In addition, the unmade nature of Eleanor Road at its north end has been protected as part of the rural ambience of the village.
- 3.4 There have been unsympathetic alterations to buildings in the past. The appraisal identifies these in section 6.4 as being:-
- Changes in window material and opening style
  - Enlargement of window openings
  - Rooflights projecting above roof slopes
  - Changes of roof materials from slate to concrete tile
  - Reduction or removal of chimneys
  - Rendering of brick and stonework
  - Damage to fabric as a result of using non traditional impermeable materials
  - Injected dampcourses
  - Loss of natural bedrock as a result of extensions
  - Fencing behind stone boundary walls
- 3.5 Supplementary Planning Guidance Note 18 for Bidston Village Conservation Area as amended in January 2000 has an appendix regarding General Development Control Policies – Aesthetic Control for Bidston Village Conservation Area. This should be used in conjunction with the character appraisal and management plan so that restoration/ refurbishment and (where appropriate) related development enhances the character of the village. The features considered important are:-
- Functional simplicity
  - Regular coursed sandstone masonry
  - Elevations containing a greater proportion of wall to window
  - Domestic scale

- Random arrangement of windows
- Interesting roof forms with pitches of various directions, dormer windows and chimney stacks
- Gable ends fronting on to streets
- Gabled entrance porches
- Stone boundary walls with pointed coping stones
- Slate roofs
- Indigenous tree species for planting schemes

### **Boundary Changes and Article 4 Directions**

- 3.6 The Management Plan makes recommendations for considering boundary changes to the Conservation Area. The Appendix D plan shows the area of modern housing development in Statham Road, Cowdrey Avenue, Lindwall Close and Ikin Close to be deleted from the Conservation Area. Some members of the CAAC consider that this area should remain on archaeological grounds and its name “Stone Horse Croft “recognised. However, Conservation Area boundaries should be based on perceptions of areas as they currently stand. The modern development is separated by high boundaries from the village scene, has sparse connection with it and is of no special interest or architectural character. The historic cricketers’ names are probably its main interest.
- 3.7 Suggestions have been made by the Wirral Society for the inclusion of land to the east of Bidston Hall encompassing the hill and taking in part of Eleanor Road and Boundary Road. Conservation Areas should be related to building structures in the main with natural features incorporated as part of the immediate setting. As the name implies the Bidston Village Conservation Area is centred on the village and the extent of land to the east of the grade II\* Bidston Hall is sufficient to provide for its immediate setting.
- 3.8 Agents for Vyner Estates have commented that the wooded and pasture approach to the village adds little or no amenity because of the presence of the Primary School and development off Lennox Lane. (Para 3.4.1) They suggested that the paddock and wood between the School and Lennox Lane should be omitted from the existing Conservation Area as it contained no historic buildings. However, this land forms part of an urban green space, acts as a buffer between the village and the main Birkenhead Road, and provides both a sense of enclosure to the village and glimpsed views of the elevated Bidston Hall from Lennox Lane. It is considered that it should remain in the Conservation Area
- 3.9 In the case of Bidston Village, there are currently no Article 4 directions associated with the unlisted buildings. In order to protect the existing unlisted original buildings and to encourage the reinstatement of lost features, it is recommended that Article 4 directions are used to withdraw permitted development rights for the following elements:
- Windows and doors
  - Roof coverings and roof features
  - The colour and surface treatment of elevations.
  - Boundary walls
  - Repairs to unadopted streets and private ways
  - Solar panels
  - Microgeneration Equipment

3.10 It is considered that the making of Article 4 directions could have considerable implications for staff resources in the conservation section. As planning applications arising from the withdrawal of permitted development rights attract no processing fee there would be a further case load on development control staff without compensatory funding.

3.11 Whilst Insall's recommendations represent a professional assessment, it is considered that, as such recommendations are made for all the Conservation Areas except Flaybrick Cemetery, further consideration needs to be given to this issue after all the 16 Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans are reported to Committee.

#### **4.0 COMMENTS OF THE BIDSTON VILLAGE CONSERVATION AREA ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAAC)**

4.1 The Bidston CAAC has produced a detailed and comprehensive response to earlier drafts of the appraisal and management plan. Comments have been made on the analysis in terms of the age of buildings. As a result Insall's have put in a rider on the plan on the Ages of Buildings at Appendix B that the colours represent the predominant phase of the building element in the light of information in the listed building description, CAAC comment and visual evidence. Similarly, the contribution of buildings to the character of the Conservation Area in Appendix C is based on visual observation and the categorisation should be reconsidered in the light of any information which raises the historical significance of the building such as if older elements are found within a more recent exterior.

4.2 Notes on historical information have been included in the file.

4.3 Minor amendments have been made to the gazetteer as a result of comment by the Society.

#### **5.0 FINANCIAL AND STAFFING IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no direct financial or staffing implications arising out of this appraisal. However, the management plan has potential implications for finance and staffing resources if the recommendation of making an article 4 direction were to be implemented. Maintenance of historic lamp standards and conservation grade paving and kerbing may require additional Council investment.

#### **6.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 None.

#### **7.0 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 None.

#### **8.0 LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 Bidston Village is within Bidston and St James Ward.

#### **9.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are positive benefits in conservation areas in retaining heritage assets and the embodied energy contained in them, thereby reducing the Borough's carbon emissions.

## **10.0 PLANNING IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 The Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan can be used to inform the evidence base for the preparation of future planning policy in the forthcoming Local Development Framework and can be used as a material consideration in determining future applications for planning permission, listed building and conservation area consent.

## **11.0 CRIME AND DISORDER STRATEGY / COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 None.

## **12.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 12.1 English Heritage - Conservation Area Appraisals – February 2006  
English Heritage – Management Plans – February 2006

## **13.0 RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended to Cabinet that:-

- (1) The Bidston Village Appraisal, as an audit of the Conservation Area, is adopted by the Council and used to inform the evidence base for the preparation of future planning policy in the forthcoming Local Development Framework and used as a material consideration in determining future applications for planning permission, listed building and conservation area consent.
- (2) The Management Plan acts as an agenda for further consultation both locally and within the Council to identify priorities for action and the resources necessary for their implementation.
- (3) A further report is prepared for Committee after all 16 Appraisals and Management Plans have been reported to Cabinet regarding the need for and relative priorities for boundary changes and Article 4 directions between areas, and the financial and staffing implications arising.

**DAVID GREEN,  
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