

WIRRAL COUNCIL

PLANNING COMMITTEE – 21st MAY 2009 ECONOMY AND REGENERATION OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 15th JUNE 2009

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF TECHNICAL SERVICES

CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN BROMBOROUGH POOL 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 the Bromborough Pool Conservation Area. 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. BROMBOROUGH POOL

The following is a list of features that are part of Bromborough Pool Conservation Area’s special character:

- Important example of a village created by wealthy industrialists that helped to revolutionise the working and living standards of its occupants.
- Historic residential area surviving within a large industrial area.
- 16 individual or groups of listed buildings, reflecting the high level of significance of the village.
- The ancient site of the Court House – designated as a scheduled monument and an important local history site.
- Buildings dated back to the early 1850s.
- Simple, but carefully detailed terraced housing.
- The architecturally interesting public buildings of the school, church, village hall and social club.
- Buildings within the area are almost entirely from the Victorian period and have escaped the wholesale alteration that has significantly damaged the character of other historic areas.
- Residential and primary public buildings set out on a grid surrounded by open green spaces.
- Houses are of 5 different types
- All houses are constructed of red brick with a Welsh slate roof. Other materials are confined to the public, factory and higher status buildings.
- Timber sliding sash windows would have featured on all of the houses. These are generally still present on all of the listed terraces and some of the semi-detached houses.
- There are relatively few extensions within the conservation area of significant size.

3.1 RESPONSE FROM STAKEHOLDERS AND AMENITY GROUPS

There is no Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC) assigned to Bromborough Pool Village, and instead consultations are sent to the Bromborough Society. Other enquiries are directed at the village's main stakeholder: Riverside Housing, which owns many of the properties. The Council also engages with local members and the Wirral Autistic Society that operates the Garden Centre and co-manages other facilities within the village, in partnership with Riverside Housing.

The Conservation Section has met Riverside Housing at a round-table meeting with the appointed consultants Donald Insall on 11/09/2007 in order to introduce the appraisal and its purpose. A representative from Ainsley Gommon Architects, who have worked closely with Riverside Housing in the village over the course of many years, were also in attendance and provided additional documentary material to Insall's. A draft copy of the document was presented to Riverside Housing in July of that year, and a final draft submitted to the association in March 2009. No formal comments have been received by the Council in response to these consultations.

The Bromborough Society has kindly responded, at very short notice, with some recommended amendments to the detail of the appraisal text. These have been integrated into the body of the document, and the Society advised no specific changes in terms of general principles or emphasis.

3.2 MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 3.2.1 Bromborough Pool is location within an area of designated primarily industrial land specifically set aside for employment purposes only. The land within the conservation area is mostly either designated as being primarily residential or as sports grounds. The construction of buildings on land designated for sports grounds is only permitted in certain instances, as set in policies RE5 and RE6 of the UDP. Applications for planning permission would be assessed for compliance with the policies set out in Section 7 of the UDP and Policies CH1, CH2 and CH22 set out in Section 11 of the Unitary Development Plan, as well as Supplementary Guidance Note SPG36.
- 3.2.2 The village of Bromborough Pool is rather isolated from the main area of suburban and commercial development around New Chester Road, and has few amenities to support itself as a settlement in its own right: no shop, post office or pub etc. Moreover, the main local hub of the village, Bromborough Pool Primary School closed last summer as a result of the local authority rationalisation of educational facilities in the area. The school may also have been significant in terms of attracting families to the area, and the new housing project promoted by Riverside Housing that was approved when the school was still operating has not proceeded on site so far.
- 3.2.3 Since Riverside Housing took over many of the properties in the 1980s, the near-terminal material decline of the village has been reversed. However, new investment is required in order to upgrade and enhance the village in the longer term, and to stimulate demand for the privately-owned dwellings. Other challenges remain also: many properties within the village have undergone adverse alteration in the last thirty years, with a number of properties displaying the presence of upvc window units, particularly to the rear. The housing association is keen to improve energy efficiency and comfort in the dwellings and has mooted the upgrading of glazing to this end. The local authority could give positive consideration to the installation of slimline double- or secondary glazing units within the frames of replacement timber window sashes, should fully specified planning application or listed building consent applications be forthcoming from them. Secondary glazing and draught-stripping is likely to remain the best method of reducing heating requirements in those properties that retain original windows and historic plain glazing.

- 3.2.4 Wirral Autistic Society has made an application to install a new garden building and car park at the garden centre on The Green, and the authority are pleased with the resulting design. It is utilitarian and economical, and yet draws upon traditional building styles to produce a structure that blends in well with its historic surroundings. It is hoped that this project will set a standard for future ancillary buildings in the village in years to come. This project also proposes the reuse of the derelict bowling green pavilion building, which has been the subject of successive vandal attacks, as conveniences for visitors to the centre.
- 3.2.5 In terms of Buildings at Risk, the closed school is the most obvious cause for concern, whilst the small building adjacent to the community centre and an outbuilding to the rear of South Cottage close to the social club are also in need of a new use and fresh investment. The church has now been taken over by the Autistic Society for both regular services and social activities. Approaches were made to the Council to convert the school for use as a playgroup or pre- / post-school facility, but the insurance requirements proved too onerous to overcome. The local authority and Riverside continue to work towards securing a viable new use.
- 3.2.6 Much of the land surrounding the village is designated for primarily industrial use and this has had some negative consequences in terms of visual amenity in the past, with poor landscaping and little active frontage in the new buildings. The waste site has now ceased operation, and although the resulting mound looms over the village nearby, eventual recultivation should mitigate the effect to a degree. An application for a significant quota of new housing on vacant plots in and around the village has been approved, but construction has failed to commence on site. The need for any new housing to be of a sufficient quality in terms of materials and detailing to complement the original buildings necessarily makes them more costly both to build and maintain over new-build houses of a standard minimum specification, and this challenges the economic viability of new housing within the settlement.
- 3.2.7 Whilst the properties dating from the first phase of development within the village are statutorily listed, an Article 4 direction is in force over the remaining unlisted houses that withdraws permitted development rights in respect of any material alteration to their exterior. Thus planning applications are required in order to carry out any works to the outside of any of the unlisted houses. Since these applications do not attract a fee, and the monitoring of the houses for unauthorised changes is unbudgeted, there are resource implications to be overcome.
- 3.2.8 Interpretation boards are sited at locations around the village, which do much to explain its history and significance. If a prospective project to construct an eastern orbital cycle route through this area of the Wirral is realised, it is possible that the village may to a degree recover from its relative obscurity and become better known and appreciated as a model settlement of the mid C19th.
- 3.2.9 The appraisal is unlikely to prompt any direct requirement for additional resources, although it does highlight the value of traditional details such as historic lamp standards, signposts, paving and kerbs and pedestrian surfaces / crossings which could require the allocation of greater resources. The continued operation of the Article 4 direction may have implications for local authority revenue and staffing – see below.
- 3.2.10 The majority of the vegetation within the village lies within private gardens. However, there are significant open green spaces in and around the designated area that may demand particular attention in terms of preservation and enhancement, e.g. the sports pitches both in front of and to the rear of the houses. A single reproduction historic lamppost survives in only one location, whilst an archive photograph shows an original column that could provide a reference for future replacements. The appraisal makes comments in relation to some of the hard landscaping and its rather dated appearance.

- 3.2.11 Some of the houses may prove difficult to upgrade in terms of their thermal performance, without risking damage to their special character, although the proliferation of reproduction window sashes and doors makes this less of a critical preservation issue. Microgeneration is also likely to prompt dilemmas regarding the preservation of essential character.
- 3.2.12 The earlier houses within the village are listed, and there may be some deposits of archaeological significance, whilst the only scheduled monument is the site of the old Bromborough Court House and its former moated enclosure. The courthouse site is almost completely unmanaged and would benefit from a comprehensive maintenance, interpretation and management programme.
- 3.2.13 There have been some instances of vandalism within the village in recent years, with the pavilion to the former bowling green being most severely affected. The school has been targeted also, with projectiles being used to smash its windows. The owners have tacked perspex sheeting over the windows in response, but this disfigures its appearance when viewed at close quarters.

3.3 BOUNDARY CHANGES & ARTICLE 4 DIRECTIONS

The management plan does not directly recommend any boundary changes.

In the case of the Bromborough Pool Conservation Area, an Article 4 direction is in force, withdrawing permitted development rights associated with the unlisted houses. The direction withdraws the right to carry out the following works:

- The enlargement, improvement or other alteration of a dwellinghouse
- Addition or alteration to roofs
- The erection or construction of a porch outside any external door
- The installation or replacement of a satellite antennae.
- Gates, fences, walls and other means of enclosure.

4.0 FINANCIAL AND STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial or staffing implications arising out of this appraisal. However, the continued operation of the Article 4 Direction has ongoing implications for finance and staffing resources. Maintenance of historic lamp standards and conservation grade paving and kerbing may require additional Council investment.

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None.

6.0 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

6.1 None.

7.0 LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The Bromborough Pool CA lies within Bromborough Ward.

8.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

8.1 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.

9.0 PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 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.

10.0 CRIME AND DISORDER STRATEGY / COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 None.

11.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

12.0 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended to Cabinet that:-

- (1) The Bromborough Pool 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 Article 4 directions between areas, boundary changes and the financial and staffing implications arising.

**DAVID GREEN,
DIRECTOR TECHNICAL SERVICES**

This report was prepared by Matthew Crook of the Built Conservation Section,
Tel. 606 2485.