

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF TECHNICAL SERVICES**

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**CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN  
WELLINGTON ROAD 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 Wellington Road 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. WELLINGTON ROAD

- 3.1 The following is a list of attributes which help define the special character of the Wellington Road conservation area:
- It is an important and very early example of a planned speculative estate of upper-middle class housing on previously undeveloped land;
  - The area contains a significant group of early 19th century listed villas of similar architectural character with long sloping gardens towards the sea;
  - Most buildings are relatively intact with the majority of their principal features surviving;
  - Buildings are constructed of high quality materials, with the use of rendered facades in pale colours and slate roofing being prominent;
  - There is a high level of architectural and somewhat unusual detailing, in particular that of the rendered facades;
  - Good quality original cast iron fencing and gateposts remain around Marine Park and on the frontage of the villas to Wellington Road;
  - All of the main buildings have a northerly view over Liverpool Bay and are designed to take account of this view;
  - Kings Parade Gardens and the adjoining open space in the dip by Kings Parade provide an open area in front of Wellington Road and give good views of its villas;
  - Good views are obtained from Marine Park towards Fort Perch Rock and the Perch Rock Lighthouse; and
  - The association of the area with the foundation of the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association.
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The appraisal explains the above basic characteristics in more detail.

The appraisal cited the following challenges to conservation as requiring special attention in terms of preservation and enhancement of character:

- *Recent development* – verging on the historic, rather than recent, the Cliff is criticised for making no concessions to its historic context.
- *Unsympathetic alterations* – loss of craft joinery and its replacement with factory-made alternatives, e.g. upvc windows that do real harm to the appearance of the road's historic properties.
- *Unsympathetic extensions* – e.g. the flat-roofed extension to Redcliffe.

- *Condition, Loss and Development pressures* – losses of entire buildings are rare, and development pressures within the conservation area mild, although there has been pressure in the recent past for subdivision of the larger properties into small units.
- *The public realm* – about half of the whole conservation area is publicly owned and the report mentions the need to promote high standards of maintenance and enhancement in and around the area.
- *Heritage at Risk* – New Brighton suffered badly in the late post-WWII period economic downturn and restructuring within Merseyside, together with its decline in popularity as a resort. However, since the 1980s the area has seen some new care and investment by its residents, and its architectural and historic qualities are being more readily appreciated. Nevertheless, restoring these fine buildings is an expensive undertaking and it is concerning that the refurbishment of Redcliffe is presently in abeyance – the building therefore remains “at risk” until the works are completed.

### 3.2 Response from the Wellington Road Conservation Area Committee (WRCAC)

The Conservation Section has received some brief comments from the amenity group, mainly seeking an explanation of discrepancies between different draft versions of the appraisal. The group has been responded to, clarifying the evolution of the document over the past year as a result of the emerging proposals for the Neptune Development in proximity to the seafront. Following this, certain passages have been edited and some re-inserted back into the body of the document. The committee placed emphasis on the need for special attention to be given to the views from the conservation area northwards towards the promenade and Liverpool Bay.

### 3.3 Management Issues

- 3.3.1 Few management issues have been critical in recent years, other than the monitoring of new developments and pressure on boundary treatments through loss, neglect and replacement. Some properties in the street have suffered the loss of their boundary treatments – brick walls and cast iron railings have disappeared. Much of the ironwork in the street is of regional importance and a comprehensive scheme of repair and refurbishment / reinstatement may be a viable way of improving the appearance and vitality of the street scene, in all likelihood necessitating some public subsidy.
- 3.3.2 Refurbishment work at Redcliffe has halted and the Council hopes that work may be able to restart as soon as possible – the slates are currently absent from the roof after stripping and the long-term consequences of this are very concerning.
- 3.3.3 The majority of the vegetation within Wellington Road lies within private gardens. However, Marine Park is within local authority ownership and will require ongoing investment in terms of maintenance and enhancement.

### 3.4 Statutory Controls

Some of the houses may prove difficult to upgrade in terms of their thermal performance, without risking damage to their special character. Microgeneration is also likely to prompt dilemmas regarding the preservation of essential character, especially given the prominence from the seafront and the close relationship between the houses and Wellington Road. Many of the earlier villas are listed, and this gives the authority control over unsympathetic works. There are no scheduled archaeological monuments, although buried archaeology is a material consideration in terms of assessing the impact of development on the settlement’s early origins.

### 3.5 Article 4 Directions

In the case of Wellington Road, 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, Insall's recommend 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.
- Hard surfacing
- Solar Panels and Microgeneration
- Gateposts and other boundary treatments.

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.

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 BOUNDARY CHANGES / FINANCIAL AND STAFFING IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The appraisal recommends that some of the southern side of Wellington Road is included within the Conservation Area in order to more closely control development on the ground above the listed villas. Given that there is little current development pressure affecting the southern side of the road, the extension of the conservation area is not regarded as a high priority. However, the extension has some logic and could be considered in due course.

4.2 As Insall's make recommendations for boundary changes in 7 of the 16 CA appraisals it is considered that a further report is required to assess the need for, priority and programme for such alterations. 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 and the boundary changes were to be implemented.

### **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 Wellington Road CA lies within New Brighton 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 Wellington Road 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.

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