

SUBJECT:	ADOPTION OF THE CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE LOWER BEBINGTON CONSERVATION AREA
WARD/S AFFECTED:	BEBINGTON / CLATTERBRIDGE
REPORT OF:	STRATEGIC DIRECTOR REGENERATION & ENVIRONMENT
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	COUNCILLOR PAT HACKETT – ECONOMY; COUNCILLOR BRIAN KENNY – ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY
KEY DECISION?	YES – AFFECTS 2 WARDS

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek the approval of Members to designate a Conservation Area in Lower Bebington. Wirral Council has published a Conservation Area appraisal for the area on the Council website. A copy of the appraisal and a map showing the proposed boundary is attached at the rear of this report.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 The Council has a duty under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to periodically assess areas of the Borough for conservation area designation and de-designation. This is reinforced by policy statements contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and associated guidance.

2.2 The Council also has a duty to protect and enhance the character of conservation areas and to preserve listed buildings in accordance with the above legislation and guidance. In order to meet those obligations, the local planning authority are required to compile appraisals which clearly identify what features of the area should be preserved or enhanced and how this can be achieved. The Management Plan and Character Appraisal will eventually sit alongside the conservation policies contained within the Local Development Framework.

3.0 THE PROPOSED CONSERVATION AREA

- 3.1 The village of Lower Bebington lies on the line of the former principal route to Chester from Birkenhead, in between the village of Tranmere and the hamlets of Spital and Poulton Lancelyn. The route follows the lower contours of the hill that rises up from the lower levels adjoining Port Sunlight to reach the settlement of Higher Bebington.
- 3.2 The original village pre-dates the surrounding later post-industrial conurbation of Birkenhead and Bebington. The village is broadly a linear settlement, with buildings on and adjacent to the route. The land either side of the road and the routes that lead off it have gradually been developed for housing. Lower Bebington has no well defined “centre” as such, but the principal buildings are the Mayer Hall complex, The Civic Centre and adjacent shops and pubs and St Andrews Church. The route through the village is a classified B road – the B1536.
- 3.3 The special interest of Lower Bebington Conservation Area is varied but can be summarised as follows:
 1. Legacy of Joseph Mayer, philanthropist and educationalist. The pastoral haven of Mayer Park remains at the heart of the settlement.
 2. Pre-industrial origins and organic morphology of the village core;
 3. Generally small scale housing but a minority of larger merchants dwellings;
 4. Mixture of buildings of all periods from pre-industrial to modern. Survival of pre-railway buildings;
 5. Varied topography of development on a series of contours falling West-East down to wards the Birkenhead-Chester railway and former tidal marsh beyond
 6. Contrast between the historic zone of the remnants of the village, the Civic Centre and its environs, and enveloping suburbia;
- 3.4 Moving out from the centre of Lower Bebington, there is a range of houses of all periods that describe the history of the village’s development over several centuries, from rural backwater to commuter suburb. Some of these form gateways to the conservation area, e.g. Mersey Terrace from the South and the Dog & Gun pub at the North. The road that runs through the settlement represents the prehistoric routeway from Birkenhead and Wallasey to Chester, weaving along the land’s contours.
- 3.5 The proposal to designate the area has a focus on recognising the Mayer Buildings and Mayer Park. A number of community groups have recently been formed whose objective is to restore and refurbish Mayer Hall, No.65 The Village (The Clock Tower) and the Park and the designation of the area with Conservation Area status will help support these groups in this work.

4.0 CONSULTATION ON THE DESIGNATION

- 4.1 A draft appraisal of the area was completed in early 2012 and was circulated to local historians, community groups and ward members.
- 4.2 Following comments received on the first a draft, a second draft was produced which sought to take account of the comments received and was uploaded to the Council's website for public comment. Letters were sent out to all residents within the proposed boundary, asking for their opinions and inviting them to a public meeting on 18th July 2013.
- 4.3 A further Open Day was organised which was held in Mayer Hall on 3 October 2013. Members of the public were able to view displays on the history and heritage of Bebington and could speak to council officers about how the designation might affect them. After the Open Day, some of the displays were re-installed in the Central Library.
- 4.4 Local residents came forward with a range of opinions in relation to the proposed conservation area. The general consensus of comments received has been broadly positive.
- 4.5 A summary of the responses received is shown in the following table, for Members' information:

Lower Bebington Conservation Area Consultation Results			
Paper Submissions			
Responder	For	Against	Comments
G.B. Highcroft Avenue	*		
E.D. Hoylake	*		Boundary should not be changed from the initial proposal; should include all landscapes
K.W. Lower Bebington	*		Boundary could be extended further, residents should be kept more informed
Anon. Sunshine	*		Boundary could be bigger; event poorly advertised
S.N. Bromborough	*		Proposed boundary reflects the diversity of the area
Anon.		*	Too restrictive, especially for the buildings within the Civic Centre
C.M.C.		*	
Submissions by Email			

Responder	For	Against	Comments
J & C.M.	*		
H.C.	*		
I & C.C.	*		
J.R. & P.P.	*		
C.O. & B.C.L.	*		
B & L.S.		*	Historical character does not justify the restrictions imposed by Conservation Area status
S.M.		*	Village character is beyond protecting due to developments of the past

n.b. responders identities have been protected above for publication purposes.

- 4.6 During the Open Day on 3 October 2013 a number of Post-Its were utilised to allow local residents attending that event to make comments on the day. Below is a summary of those comments that were left on post-it notes at the event & provided on questionnaires that were circulated:

In favour of the proposals:

1. We came to Bebington because of the special character of the area;
2. the designation should provide recognition and protect against unsuitable development in the future;
3. would act as a safeguard for a significant number of heritage assets, both individual and groups of buildings;
4. Help protect the architectural integrity of the area;
5. fully support it - nice to see the area recognised as important historically;
6. Helpful to hear the thinking behind the designation;
7. It will help protect and preserve this special area;
8. the character can now be preserved;
9. the proposed conservation area should not be reduced, it is crucial to include all the historic features, helps support the park and other green space in the area;
10. about time Bebington was recognized;
11. Glad to see Bethany Crescent included in Conservation Area;
12. can only be good for the area and community;
13. could be bigger;
14. protect the area for the future;
15. critical to protect the buildings;
16. not against it just the way it is being pushed through;
17. should widen the boundary;
18. Lower Bebington has long lacked a degree of protection afforded by CA status;
19. Lived in Bebington for over 30 years - think it would be wonderful to protect the area

Against the proposals:

1. Re: consultation process – undemocratic;
2. concern that cannot afford to do work to house i.e. replace concrete tiles with slate;
3. biggest threat to the village is inappropriate development not the wrong rainwater goods;
4. unfair to force local residents to subsidise the increase in council owned land;
5. suggest a more manageable boundary;
6. lack of interest in debate;
7. debate did not promote the benefits of living in a Conservation area; appraisal document decided which buildings were good and which were bad, feel strongly that the proposed inclusion of the Medical Centre within the CA is not in the best interests of the wider community;
8. concerned that it will affect what can be done to properties;
9. may hinder economic growth;
10. by incorporating the medical centre, the cost of keeping it in good condition may become prohibitive and medical services may have to move;
11. cannot see why the medical centre is included concrete monstrosities;
12. little to conserve except for the parks;
13. Bebington has no centre;
14. unhappy about restrictions and costs - too restrictive in terms of maintaining buildings, particularly commercial buildings (civic centre should not be included).

6.0 POLICY CONTEXT

- 6.1 The policy for Lower Bebington Conservation Area is likely to centre on ensuring that the area's most significant properties are conserved, whilst all new development in and adjacent to the area is of a character and standard appropriate to the settlement's special character. All new policies will relate to government guidance as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, and will be the subject of ongoing consultation and co-operation with the local community. In the meantime, the local authority will adhere to generic conservation policy as contained in national guidance and local UDP policy CH2.
- 6.2 If the proposed conservation area is designated then it is usually best practice to compile and adopt a Management Plan that sets out how the area can be most effectively managed, preserved and enhanced for the future, applying the principals behind conservation area designations. Mindful of residents' concerns about the financial implications of removing permitted development rights, there are no plans to introduce an Article 4 Direction that would strengthen planning regulations in relation to changes of materials and finishes for unlisted properties.

7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL: I.T; STAFFING & ASSETS

7.1 The designation of the area as a Conservation Area could have potential financial implications with regards to the provision of more traditional street furniture, lighting and paving solutions that the areas status as a Conservation Area may expect to secure.

7.2 The area's designation will likely result in additional applications submitted to the Council for determination. This will mostly be in the form of planning applications for demolitions of more than 50% of any structure, including boundary walls, side and front extensions and works to trees, since trees within Conservation Areas are afforded protected status. However, any additional applications would be dealt with using existing resources within the Development Management Teams so there are no additional staffing implications for the Council in this regard.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

8.1 There are no implications arising directly from this report under this heading.

9.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no implications arising directly from this report under this heading.

10.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no implications arising directly from this report under this heading.

11.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There implications of these proposals on climate change and carbon resources are largely neutral.

12.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

12.1 The planning implications arising from this report are outlined above and there are no direct Community Safety implications arising from this report.

13.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

13.1 That the Planning Committee note the proposed designation of Lower Bebington as a Conservation Area together with the attached Character Appraisal and boundary plan and recommend to Council that the designation be approved as a material consideration in planning and conservation related matters.

14.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 14.1 The Council has a duty under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to periodically assess areas of the Borough for conservation area designation and de-designation. This is reinforced by policy statements contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and associated guidance.
- 14.2 The recommendation reflects the special character of Lower Bebington set against the background of conservation area designations.

15.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- English Heritage Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas (2006)
- NPPF

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REFERENCE MATERIAL

Lower Bebington Conservation Area Appraisal.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date