

Cabinet – 28 February 2007

Church Hill Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan

Portfolio	Councillor Adrian Andrew - Regeneration and Enterprise
Service Area:	Regeneration – Delivery and Development
Wards:	St Matthews
Key decision:	Yes
Forward Plan:	Yes

Summary of report

This report outlines the role that Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans play in enabling the Council to fulfil its statutory functions in relation to Conservation Areas.

The Council, in line with the requirements of Best Value Performance Indicator 219, is currently undertaking a rolling programme of Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans.

Conservation Area designation is the main instrument available to Local Planning Authorities to give effect to conservation policies for a particular neighbourhood or area. Designation introduces a general planning control over the demolition of unlisted buildings and provides the basis for policies designed to preserve or enhance all the aspects of character or appearance that define an area's special interest.

Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 stresses the need for local planning authorities to make an assessment of the special character, and appearance of all Conservation Areas in their districts and to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of this special character.

The Appraisals and Management Plans are also essential tools in the continuing development of heritage led regeneration initiatives across the Borough and will provide important data and actions to support external funding bids.

An objective and clear character appraisal will provide a sound basis on which to make fully informed development control decisions and to carry out initiatives to promote the area. The more clearly the special architectural or historic interest that justifies designation is defined and recorded, the sounder will be the basis for local plan policies and development control decisions. Such definition also assists in the formulation of proposals for the preservation and enhancement of the character or appearance of an area.

The format of this appraisal and management plan is based on the English Heritage publication 'Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals (2006) and Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas (2006)'.

The full Church Hill Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan has been provided as hard copies in each of the group rooms.

Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to adopt the updated Church Hill Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan as set out in Appendix A of this report. Cabinet is recommended to note that a draft of the Church Hill Conservation Area Appraisal was approved by Cabinet in March 2006.

Resource and legal considerations

There are no financial implications relating to the adoption of this appraisal.

Conservation Areas are 'areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance (Section 69 (1) (a) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990). Local Authorities are required to designate Conservation Areas, to keep them under review and, if appropriate to designate further areas (Section 69 (2)). Local Authorities are also required to formulate and publish proposals for any parts of their area which are a Conservation Area (Section 71 (1)) and to submit any such proposals to a public meeting and have regard to any views concerning the proposals expressed by persons attending the meeting (Section 71 (2) and (3)).

This appraisal and management plan fulfils the Council's duties under Section 69 and 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to 'review our areas from time to time' and to 'formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas'.

The implementation of the recommendations in the management plan will utilise existing Council resources. Some recommendations will require a separate approval following further work and consultation, in which instances, a separate report will be presented to the relevant authorising committee.

Citizen impact

The preservation and enhancement of a Conservation Area creates an asset that is available for all members of the community to learn from and enjoy.

Community safety

No issues.

Environmental impact

Local Planning Authorities are bound in exercising their planning powers, to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area.

The Church Hill Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan defines aspects of the character and appearance that either contribute to or detract from the nature of the area.

This document will be used to inform development control decisions on planning applications and applications for Conservation Area Consent within the Church Hill Conservation Area and provides recommended proposals to preserve and enhance the Conservation Area.

Performance and risk management issues

From 1st April 2005 BV 219b has measured the percentage of Conservation Areas in the local authority area with an up-to-date character appraisal. BV219c has measured the percentage of Conservation Areas in the local authority area with an up-to-date management plan.

Together with BV 219a (number of Conservation Areas) this indicator will monitor whether planning and other decisions are based on an informed understanding of the special character of the local historic environment and the needs of the community it supports.

The adoption of this appraisal and management plan will contribute to the Council's outturn in relation to this BVPI.

Failure to adopt will potentially undermine planning decisions and potentially lead to poor performance rates against a key indicator in the Environment Block.

Equality implications

Conservation Area policy is applied equally to all property owners/occupiers within the area of designation.

Consultation

Public consultation has been carried out in accordance with the Councils adopted Statement of Community Involvement and in accordance with the requirements of Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

All properties within the Conservation Area were written to and an exhibition and public meeting were held at the Crossing at St Pauls. All relevant departments within the Council were consulted.

All feedback from the consultation has been considered and relevant comments have been incorporated into the document.

Vision 2008

The report has particular relevance to priority 6 of a Vision for Walsall – *Encourage everyone to feel proud of Walsall*. This priority states:

‘Walsall people, deep down, have a pride and loyalty to their community, their town and their borough. They are frustrated at Walsall’s poor image, and at negative perceptions of the Black Country and the West Midlands generally. Local people, local businesses, our schools and colleges want Walsall to be a borough with a strong, positive image, that is known for its good things – its people, its industry, its commitment and pride, its location and its attractions.’

Background papers

All on the Church Hill Conservation Area file.

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Signed:

Executive Director:

Date: 19 February 2007



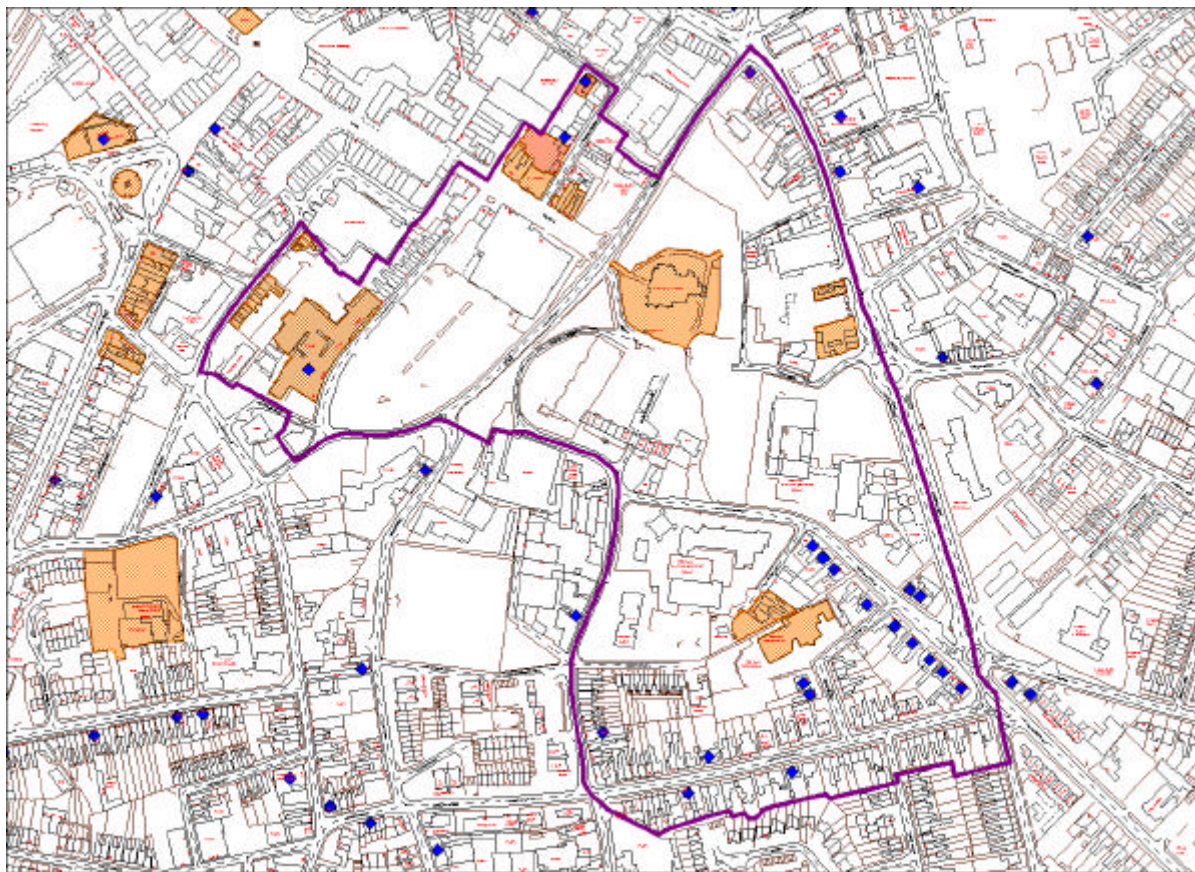
Signed:

Portfolio Holder:

Date: 19 February 2007

Church Hill Conservation Area

The Church Hill Conservation Area was designated in March 1979 and covers an area of 20.5 hectares. What remains around Church Hill is the footprint of a medieval street layout with the changes introduced in Victorian times. Significant areas of heritage townscape have been retained with individual buildings of historic note. The special interest of this area is that it preserves important examples of the history of the development of Walsall within an overall heritage townscape that benefits from the steep topography of its hill location.



Map identifying the Conservation Area boundary (purple), locally listed buildings (blue) and statutorily listed buildings (orange).

Over the last seven years or so, Walsall Council has attracted substantial amounts of grant funding for building repair and architectural reinstatement projects in Conservation Areas. The total value of funding amounts available for projects amounts to over £4,581,000. Walsall Council has contributed in the region of £640,000 but almost £4 million has been provided by English Heritage, Heritage Lottery Fund, Advantage West Midlands, Walsall's New Deal for Communities and the European Regional Development Fund. In addition to this, private property owners have made financial contributions to works, typically in the region of 10-25% of project costs.