

Subject: Conservation Strategy

Status: For Publication

Report to: Cabinet

Date: 17th February 2010

Report of: Planning Manager

Portfolio

Holder: Regeneration

Key Decision: Yes

Forward Plan General Exception Special Urgency

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to gain the support of members for the future areas of work focus for the two newly appointed Conservation Officers. The best use of resources requires that a strategy for action should be developed and it is also a condition of the English Heritage support that an action plan is submitted to English Heritage at an early date.
- 1.2 The conservation of the historic environment of the Borough has also been highlighted as a concern to residents and specific interest groups in feed back from the Core Strategy Area Visions. The recent appointment of two conservation officers (with financial support from English Heritage) and the development of the Local Development Framework now present the opportunity to lead in addressing matters of historic conservation. Furthermore English Heritage has offered grant aid towards the preparation of conservation area appraisals and management plans and has offered to support further initiatives.
- 1.3 It is inevitable that the programme outlined in this report will be the subject of change as further information is revealed and the Government's programme for heritage protection reform and emerging English Heritage guidance evolves.

2. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 2.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities:-
- Delivering quality Services to our customers
 - Delivering regeneration across the Borough
 - Encouraging healthy and respectful communities
 - Keeping our Borough clean, green and safe

- Promoting the Borough
- Providing value for money services

3. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

3.1 All the issues raised and the recommendation(s) in this report involve risk considerations as set out below:

- The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, lays duties on local authorities with respect to:
 - i. Authorisation of listed building consents
 - ii. Prevention and deterioration and damage to listed buildings
 - iii. Designation of conservation area
 - iv. Formulation of proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation area
- The Act also affords a local authority, discretionary powers to;
 - i. Issue enforcement notices and initiate prosecutions against unauthorised works to listed buildings or unauthorised demolition of an unlisted building in a conservation area
 - ii. Offer grant aid in support of some of the above functions (this would require a funding commitment to be established through a future budget setting process)
- Local authorities have also been recommended to:
 - i. Prepare an overarching Historic Environment Strategy that should be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)
 - ii. Consider the preparation of non statutory local designations which identify buildings that contribute to the local character and distinctiveness of an area
 - iii. Ensure that every conservation area is regularly reviewed and has an up to date (not more than five years old) appraisal that defines and records its special interest, character and appearance to assist with its discharge of statutory duties
 - iv. Ensure that every conservation area has an adopted management plan
 - v. Maintain or have access to a Historic Environment Record (HER) to assist with its discharge of statutory duties
- The programme of action outlined in this report will assist the Council to fulfil its duties and responsibilities in respect of the above and ensure the better management of the heritage assets within the Borough.
- A condition of the grant-aid that is being received from English Heritage to support the two conservation officer posts is that a work plan and targets are submitted to and approved by English Heritage within 3 months of their appointment. English Heritage has agreed to allow an extension of time so that this report can be considered by Cabinet. The performance and targets are to be the subject of an annual joint review.

- It is a further condition of the English Heritage grant-aid that the conservation officer post that is subject to 3 year financial support is consolidated into the Council's establishment. If the post is terminated within three years of the grant-aid period, the grant is repayable on a tapered basis.

4. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

- 4.1 As noted above, the proposed strategy is required to meet the conditions of the English Heritage grant-aid for the new dedicated conservation officers.
- 4.2 The proposed strategy is set out as an Appendix to this report. It addresses the three year period that is covered by the English Heritage grant-aid for the assistant conservation officer post. A summary of the key Action Points is given in a table at the end of the Appendix.
- 4.3 In addition to the summarised points there will be a number of standard and ongoing functions and duties relating to data recording and the provision of advice and guidance, training and control work on heritage, conservation and design matters.

COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:

5. SECTION 151 OFFICER

- 5.1 The agreed programme of work will enable the Council to confirm £61k in total of English Heritage funding over the next 3 years.
- 5.2 Future financial implications cannot be quantified at this time, however, the conservation strategy may have further financial implications for the Council, inter alia, additional resources to support conservation matters or the ability to access grants from other agencies.

6. MONITORING OFFICER

- 6.1 Comments have been included within the report.

7. HEAD OF PEOPLE AND POLICY (ON BEHALF OF THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE)

- 7.1 No HR Implications.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The work areas set out in the Appendix to this report represent the enabling framework for the conservation team within Rossendale Borough Council. The creation of an information baseline for both Listed Buildings and (though the preparation of appraisals) Conservation Areas will provide the basis for both consistent enforcement action and advice to property owners within the Borough. A review of existing and potential Article 4 directions is a necessary component of this work.

- 8.2 Related designations and databases are also described; Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Historic Parks and Gardens, the Historic Environment Record and locally important buildings. Although statutorily less significant, they describe the full range of heritage issues with which the conservation team will have to deal, and provide a basis for engagement with the public and local heritage groups.
- 8.3 Alongside the managerial aspects of conservation, the report also describes proactive areas of work which can be used to promote the interests of heritage and high quality design in Rossendale. The Local Development Framework provides an opportunity to plan strategically for important sites and specific subject areas. The potential for a Townscape Heritage Initiative offers partnership funding for regeneration in Bacup town centre Conservation Area, but as it requires match funding from the Council and developers, it is acknowledged that the Council will need to carefully consider its potential for delivery against other Council priorities and commitments. Training for Members and officers will assist all aspects of conservation work and provide a basis for the establishment of a Historic Environment and Design Champion, and a possible Heritage and Design Award.
- 8.4 The work areas reflect immediate priorities for the conservation team in terms of the creation of databases and the updating of designations. They also allow for the development of medium and longer term objectives based on strategic planning, outreach and regeneration work.

9. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 9.1 That members approve the work areas described and programme set out in the Appendix to this report as the basis for the activities of the Conservation Officers based in Development Control and that the programme of work covering the following topics be forwarded to English Heritage:
- Listed Buildings
 - Conservation Areas
 - Archaeology (Scheduled Ancient Monuments)
 - Historic Environment Record
 - Historic Parks and Gardens
 - Locally Important Buildings
 - Local Authority Heritage Owned Assets
 - Heritage Funding Opportunities (Including the potential for a Townscape Heritage Initiative (Bacup Town Centre))
 - Local Development Framework
 - Training
 - Historic Environment and Design Champions
 - Heritage and Design Award
 - Promotion and Publicity
 - Enforcement Control

9.2 All future minor amendments to the strategy and the actions points contained therein to be delegated to the Director of Business in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

10. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

10.1 None

11. COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Is a Community Impact Assessment required No

Is a Community Impact Assessment attached No

12. BIODIVERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Is a Biodiversity Impact Assessment required No

Is a Biodiversity Impact Assessment attached No

Contact Officer	
Name	David M Hayes
Position	Principal Conservation Officer
Service / Team	Development Control
Telephone	01706 238630
Email address	DavidHayes@rossendalebc.gov.uk

No background papers