

COMMITTEE REPORT

Report to
Planning Committee

Report of
Head of Planning

Title
Adoption of Conservation Area Appraisals, Management Plans and boundary amendments for the Hill Top and Lady Herbert's Garden Conservation Areas.

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To outline the content and proposals of the Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans for the Hill Top Conservation Area (Appendices 1 & 2) and for the Lady Herbert's Garden Conservation Area (Appendices 3 & 4) including boundary amendments.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 It is recommended that Planning Committee:
- Adopt the Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans as planning guidance.
 - Amend the boundaries of both Conservation Areas

3.0 Information/Background

- 3.1 Conservation Areas are defined by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as an '*area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*'. Conservation Area designation means that planning permission is required for the demolition of most structures, notice has to be given to fell trees, the extent of permitted development rights is reduced and a high standard is required for all development schemes. Local planning authorities also have a duty to periodically review the extent of the designated area and expand (or reduce) the Conservation Area boundary as is appropriate.
- 3.2 The appraisal and management plan define why the area is of special interest, what is threatening the preservation of that interest and then identifies actions

for the positive future management of the area. The documents support the active management of the Conservation Area through the development control process and would be used to defend the Council's position at any planning appeals.

3.3 Hill Top Conservation Area

- 3.4 The Hilltop Conservation Area around Holy Trinity Church, the Cathedral and the Council House in the city centre was declared a Conservation Area on 8th August 1969. Its national importance was recognised by the Department of the Environment in December 1976 when it was granted the status of Outstanding Conservation Area. The Area contains thirty one Listed Buildings including 6 Grade I buildings and 5 Grade II* buildings and has been the religious and civic heart of Coventry since Anglo-Saxon times.

3.5 Lady Herbert's Garden Conservation Area

- 3.6 The gardens were laid out by Coventry industrialist Sir Alfred Herbert between 1930 and 1939 as a memorial to his wife and included a group of Almshouses for local widows. The Almshouse, perimeter walls and Summer House are all Listed Grade II. The gardens also include the best preserved section of the City's medieval defensive wall and the only two remaining gates which are all Grade I Listed. The Conservation Area was also designated on the 8th August 1969 and the boundary was amended to include the now demolished Coventry Theatre in 1977. The proposed extension of the Conservation Area boundary would include the Grade I Listed Old Grammar School and fourteen Locally Listed Buildings along The Burges, many of which are of medieval origin.

4.0 Issues and Proposals

- 4.1 **Hill Top.** The appraisal and management plan have identified the following issues affecting the Conservation Area including;

- the need to amend the boundary to respect developments that have taken place since 1969,
- poor quality directional signage and heritage interpretation,
- some buildings in declining condition requiring remedial works,
- the poor quality of several routes into the conservation area from adjoining areas such as Pepper Lane,
- street clutter and inadequate bin storage,
- the poor condition of some highway surfaces.

- 4.2 The management plan proposes actions including;

- the extension of the Conservation Area boundary to include the Herbert Museum, part of Priory Place and the landscaping outside Holy Trinity Church, (Appendix 1 Section 4)
- the use of Article 4 Directions to further restrict permitted development rights to prevent repeats of incidents like the painting of the sandstone 'African Village' restaurant on Bayley Lane,
- requirements for improved bin storage in any new developments,

- action on buildings deemed to be ‘at risk’,
- an improved maintenance regime for the cobble surfaces.

4.3 **Lady Herbert’s Garden.** The appraisal and management plan have identified the following issues affecting the Conservation Area including;

- the need to amend the boundary to respect recent developments like the Transport Museum and include historic buildings and streets that had previously been omitted, (Appendix 3 Section 2.4)
- anti-social behaviour in Lady Herbert’s Garden which is a nuisance to residents and causes damage to the heritage assets within the garden,
- poor quality approaches to the Area from Cook Street and Volgograd Place,
- Neglected buildings which are at risk,
- Potential future development sites on Hales Street and Bishops Street.

4.4 The Management Plan proposes actions including;

- amending the boundary to respect the changes to the Transport Museum and to include the Grade 1 Listed Old Grammar School, the Locally Listed buildings on The Burges and the Old Fire Station,
- support moves to improve the security of Lady Herbert’s Garden without damaging the historic environment,
- support developments within and adjoining the Conservation Area that enhance the character and appearance of the Area,
- take action to preserve historic buildings at risk.

5.0 Consultation

5.1 Planning Committee approved the draft appraisal and management plan documents for public consultation at their meeting on the 24th July 2014. The documents for both Conservation Areas were the subject of a public consultation between the 18th August and the 24th October 2014. Posters were displayed at prominent locations around both Areas, principal stakeholders were written to directly and the proposals were further publicised online, through social media and in the local press.

5.2 Hill Top

5.3 A questionnaire on the Council’s website received fifty seven responses while 3 further written responses were also received.

- 82% of respondents agreed with the Key Issues identified in the appraisal.
- 93% of respondents agreed with the boundary inclusion of the Hebert Museum within the Area.
- 91% of respondents agreed with the inclusion of the land outside Holy Trinity Church within the Conservation Area.
- 94% of respondents supported the amendment to the boundary in Priory Place.
- 82% of respondents agreed with the heritage protection measures in the management plan document, while 18% agreed in part

- 88% of respondents agreed with the design of new development measures in the management plan, while 12% agreed in-part.
- 76% of respondents agreed with the proposals for the public realm in the management plan while 24% agreed in-part.

5.4 Where respondents did not fully agree with a proposal they were given the opportunity to comment further and a summary report detailing these has been produced. The principal item expressed for Hill Top concerned the use of stone setts on road surfaces and on some pavements and the access problems they cause for those with impaired mobility and vision. In light of this Action 4.3 in the Management Plan has been amended to ensure that future paving schemes for the Hill Top area provide smooth routes, smooth crossings and dropped curbs to improve accessibility for all citizens.

5.5 Lady Herbert's Garden

5.6 A questionnaire on the Council's website received 25 responses while one further written response was also received.

- 69% of respondents agreed with the Key Issues identified in the appraisal while 31% agreed in part.
- 88% of respondents agreed with the boundary amendment to include The Transport Museum and The Burges.
- 80% of respondents agreed with the heritage protection measures in the management plan document, while 20% agreed in part.
- 94% of respondents agreed with the design of new development measures in the management plan, while 6% agreed in-part.
- 81% of respondents agreed with the proposals for the public realm in the management plan while 19% agreed in-part.

5.7 As with Hill Top where the respondents did not fully agree with a proposal they were given the opportunity to comment further. The principal additional comment made about the Lady Herbert's Garden Area was the enhancement and de-culverting of the River Sherbourne where it emerges behind the Burges and runs parallel to Hales Street. In light of this Section 3.6 of the Management Plan has been amended accordingly to support measures that enhance and reveal the river.

6.0 Conclusion

6.1 In conclusion the adoption of the Conservation Area Appraisals, Management Plans and the accompanying amendment of the boundaries have strong support and offer enhanced protection to the City's historic and built environment. By identifying what is significant and where there is potential for enhancement in both Areas it provides guidance to residents, developers and property owners on how to manage change while preserving their special interest.

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