
EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON 21 JUNE 2012

EEOSP.37/12 BOTCHERGATE CONSERVATION APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer (Mrs Edwards) submitted report OS.17/12 that provided Members with the comments from the small Task Group which considered the responses to the consultation of the Botchergate Conservation Appraisal and Management Plan.

Mrs Edwards reminded Members that the initial report and proposals were considered by the Panel at their meeting on 20 October 2011 prior to public consultation. As the report had been discussed in depth at that meeting the Chairman agreed that a small group of Members from the Panel should meet with the Heritage Officer to consider the response to the consultation which was the current role of the Panel. The group, consisting of Councillor Bowditch, Layden and Nedved, met with the Heritage Officer and the Principal Local Plans Officer on 13 June 2012.

At that meeting the Heritage Officer explained to members that, following approval of the draft document by Council on 8 November 2011, a period of public consultation ran from 3 January 2012 to 5 March 2012. That consultation comprised of an exhibition at Carlisle library, and an unstaffed exhibition at the Civic Centre. The draft was also available on the City Council's website along with a comments form which could be downloaded. A design workshop event for local retailers, business representatives, community representations and officers and Members from both City and County Councils was held at Greystone Community Centre on 20 January 2012. As a result of the consultation 43 individual responses were received and there were no objections raised to the proposed modifications to the Conservation Area boundary. Task Group Members were given the opportunity to ask questions to clarify any issues within the report and looked closely at the consultation responses and the response to those.

During the course of the Task Group meeting a number of points were raised and it was recommended that those points were presented to the Executive for their consideration. The points raised included:

- Historical buildings outside of the boundary being taken into consideration
- Concerns about the City Council's capacity to undertake enforcement action on breaches of planning control or the neglect of Listed Buildings
- Members would like to see positive action within the action plan, which would be produced should the document be adopted by the Council, to address the issue of signage and hoardings to the impromptu car park opposite Tait Street junction

- The area could be substantially enhanced with improved streetscape
- Members noted that instances of poor design made the area look inconsistent and shabby and small enhancements would improve the area
- Members agreed that the consultation period was robust and following scrutiny of the responses to the consultation, agreed with the changes included in the revised document to address any views or concerns.

In considering the report Members raised the following comments and questions:

The Director of Economic Development (Mrs Meek) assured Members that any development adjacent to the Conservation Area would take into account the principles set out in the Conservation Area Management Plan.

Who would be responsible for the setting of the Conservation Area boundary? Would the boundary be “set in stone” or was there the potential to vary it if an issue was raised?

Mrs Meek explained that the boundary would be recommended by the Executive to Council and once approved would be set in place. However if an issue arose regarding the boundary in the future the matter could be referred to the Executive for consideration.

A number of trees had been removed from the area over the years and they softened the area. The City Council would need to link with the County Council with regard to road improvement issues but the City Council needed to be firm in its support for the area.

Members acknowledged that there was not as much funding available for improvements but suggested that issues such as transport arrangements and other enhancements, such as more trees, could be included in the Local Plan.

There had been improvements in Botchergate but the Task Group did not believe that a lack of funding should put constraints on possible future improvements.

The Economy and Enterprise Portfolio Holder thanked the Task Group for their work which he had found very helpful. The Portfolio Holder stated that the work of the Local Environment team had already started the improvement work by steam cleaning the streets but acknowledged that it would be difficult to maintain due to the nature of Botchergate. The Portfolio Holder believed that the clean up was a good start and that improvements to the street scene and businesses taking responsibility for keeping the area clean was important and advised that the Council were building good relationships with business holders in the area.

The Portfolio Holder continued that there had been a very useful consultation event held in January with partners regarding the proposed changes to the boundary. The Executive wished to see that work taken further and issues such as transport would be discussed with the County Council.

A Member acknowledged the work done by Mr McKnight in the area and stated that it was unfortunate that the work was not taken further.

A Member who was also a member of the Development Control Committee advised that planning permission had been granted for a development approximately 8 years ago but that the development had not been taken up.

The hoarding on the Crown public house and Moods establishment had a detrimental impact on the area.

Once the area was cleaned how would Officers ensure it was maintained?

Mrs Meek advised that that was the purpose of the Management Plan and more power could be given to Officers as the area was a Conservation Area.

Would the standards still be in place in the future?

Mrs Meek explained that the area was a Conservation Area in perpetuity and was set in the Conservation Appraisal Plan.

It would be useful for Panel to have sight of the Action Plan which was due to be developed following approval of the Conservation Area.

It had been stated that the number of enforcement officers was to be reduced to one. Would that leave enough members of staff to take enforcement action?

Mrs Meek advised that there had not been a reduction in the number of Enforcement Officers. However one of the Officers was due to retire and a Lean Systems review would look at the process but no decision had been made.

RESOLVED – 1. That the Task Group Report OS.17/12 be agreed by the Panel.

2. That the comments from the Task Group be referred to the Executive for their consideration.

3. That the Action Plan be brought to Panel for consideration when available.