



ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Panel Report

Public

Date of Meeting: 29th November 2012

Title: BOTCHERGATE CONSERVATION AREA - ACTION PLAN

Report of: Director of Economic Development

Report reference: ED.36/12

Summary:

The report outlines the actions contained in the Botchergate Conservation Area Management Plan and updates Members on how these are being progressed.

Questions for / input required from Scrutiny:

On the various aspects outlined in the action plan.

Recommendations:

That the areas for action and the timetable are noted.

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Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers: None

Botchergate Conservation Appraisal and Management Plan was adopted in July 2012.

The Management Plan contains an implementation matrix attached at Appendix 1.

The implementation identified three strands of work for the conservation area:

- Conservation Area Review – This has been completed and the new Conservation Area has been reported through Council.
- Public Realm Improvements – these cover a wide range of issues all affecting the main thoroughfare through Botchergate and are set out in more detail below.
- Protection of Historic Fabric – This recognised the ongoing work in relation to development proposals for Botchergate where the Council's regulatory functions in relation to Environmental Health and Planning are required and continue to promote the historic qualities of the area.

Conservation Area Review

Formal notification and publication is now being finalised and we are aware of some new owners who need to be informed of the new conservation area.

Public Realm Improvements

Signage

In conjunction with the Botchergate work there is now scoping work underway to develop a project for improved or new signage and interpretive panels throughout the City Centre and at points of arrival into Carlisle such as the car parks and Citadel Station. The objective is to ensure a more user friendly and more presentable city centre with clear, informative, and well maintained signage for visitors and residents alike. Botchergate is a main entrance to the city with the car parks at Cecil Street and William Street and these are key entrance points where the issue of signage will be picked up.

In addition to recent signage improvements undertaken by the City Council and partners (at the 'Roman Gateway'), there is ample knowledge to be drawn from other towns and cities that have already done this, or are in the process of developing their signage. In particular Penrith has recently installed a new suite of signage and information panels and Kendal did likewise around 3 years ago.

Alongside this the County Council are also considering highways signage and following a recent presentation to the local Highways & Transport Working Group, the Carlisle Local Area Committee have now resolved that a joint County and City Task and Finish Group be set up to consider how the directives of the Manual for Streets 1 (published 2007) and Manual for Streets 2 (2010) may be promoted in the Carlisle area. It is understood that work on this will commence in early 2013 and we see it as an opportunity for partnership working to ensure integration of these two areas of work.

De-cluttering

In line with the Manual for Streets, which has changed the traditional heavily engineered view of the highway environment, and to pay far more attention to 'place-making' and 'context', work will be undertaken to de-clutter all street furniture not only the signs but in particular the use of bollards and railings. The Conservation Area Management Plan particularly identified all the railings around the St Nicholas junction as detracting from the Conservation Area. Lessons can now be learnt from the new Caldewgate junction where the use of guard railings has been minimised, making a more attractive and open pedestrian environment.

This is a County Council function as Highway Authority and will be picked up by the Task and Finish group in the New Year.

Street Furniture

The County Council has been reviewing its current contracts in relation to bus shelters and City Council officers have been in discussions with the County Council about the existing contracts. No date is currently set for the replacement however this would mean new bus shelters which would include replacements in Botchergate conservation area.

Street Trees

Due to a number of services which are in the highway and the width of the pavement in Botchergate there are limited opportunities to enhance the green environment (subject to investigative work). Two mature trees have recently been removed from the green space of Christchurch Gardens and these need to be replaced and in the short term will enhance the natural quality. Other planting will be considered in line with the de-cluttering programme. Where it may be necessary to retain guard railings or other bollards,

consideration should be given to the wider environmental setting, with possible inclusion of trees to enhance the area.

Protection of Historic Fabric

Officers are aware that since the workshop in January 2012 which explored discussions about the wider Botchergate Area there has been some development interest in the area but to-date no detailed plans have been finalised. An individual is seeking to bring together a number of plans for the area but as yet the details and identified landowner support is still awaited.

Discussions have been held and a planning application approved in July for the Sherwood Hotel for conversion to seven apartments and improvement to the shop fronts. This is a significant 'key townscape frontage' property on the corner of Botchergate and Tait Street.

Further discussions have been held with the owners of the block at 1&2 South Henry Street/149-159 Botchergate/1 Rydal Street to move forward their redevelopment plans.

'Indiagate', a new restaurant in Botchergate, has improved the facade of the former KwikSave building and whilst the building is not in itself of great architectural merit, its refurbishment is a substantial improvement on the previous empty unit.

Numbers 103 and 105 Botchergate have recently been refurbished including new shop frontages which replace the original proportions of the shop units more in keeping with the conservation area rather than the modern facades they replaced.

Action Plan Timetable

| Implementation Matrix Category | Scheme | By Whom | Timescale |
|--------------------------------|---|--|-------------------------|
| Conservation Area Review | Notices and notification to property owners | City Council – Heritage Officer | November/Dec 2012 |
| Public Realm Improvements | Signage | City Council/County Council partnership with City Council lead | Commenced November 2012 |
| | De-cluttering | County Council lead Task and Finish Group | Jan 2013 start |

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|--|--|
| | Street Furniture | Bus shelters – County Council lead with City Council input | Ongoing discussions |
| | Street Trees | Initial planting with later links to de-cluttering programme | Winter planting season Nov- March for initial scheme |
| Protection of Historic Fabric | Development Proposals | Private Sector | Ongoing Collective interest updating in November |
| | Planning consents | Private sector | Some consents in place waiting implementation |

Impact assessments

Does the change have an impact on the following?

| Equality Impact Screening | Impact Yes/No? | Is the impact positive or negative? |
|--|----------------|-------------------------------------|
| Does the policy/service impact on the following? | | |
| Age | No | |
| Disability | No | |
| Race | No | |
| Gender/ Transgender | No | |
| Sexual Orientation | No | |
| Religion or belief | No | |
| Human Rights | No | |
| Health inequalities | No | |
| Rurality | No | |

If you consider there is either no impact or no negative impact, please give reasons:

The conservation area is for the benefit of all and does not impact on any one sector of the community. Issues relating to accessibility will be considered at the time of any changes to the public realm and not directly impacted by this report.

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If an equality Impact is necessary, please contact the P&P team.

Appendix 1

Implementation Matrix

| Action | Description | Purpose | Agent | Timescale | Document Reference |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|---|-------------|--------------------|
| Conservation Area Boundary Review | Amend boundary at English Gate Plaza, Christchurch Gardens and 12-16 St Nicholas Street. | Rationalisation of boundary at English Gate Plaza to reflect current building plots. Increased control over future developments at Christchurch Gardens and 12-16 St Nicholas Street. | City Council via Full Council approval of Conservation Area Appraisal | Summer 2012 | Para 2.2 |
| Public Realm Improvements (Minor) | Ongoing and incremental de-cluttering, appropriate replacement, and reinstatement of historic street masonry, street furniture and street nameplates. | To enhance the visual quality of the conservation area, protect surviving fabric in the public realm and remediate against inappropriate installations. | County Council in its role as highway authority, in conjunction with the City Council . | Ongoing | Para 2.3 |
| Protection of Historic fabric | Guidance and pre-application advice to promote works sympathetic to the character of the conservation area. Full use of measures to ensure against breaches of planning, advertisement or listed building consent. | To maintain the character of the conservation area and to ensure that existing planning controls are adhered to and any infringements are enforced. | City Council Planning Policy and Development Management functions. | Ongoing | Para 2.4 |