

Brigstock Conservation Area Management Proposals

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Format and Derivation

This management proposal document sets out a mid- to long-term strategy in the form of a series of recommendations and guidelines for the Brigstock Conservation Area. It has been informed by the Brigstock Conservation Area Appraisal, which identified the area's special character and concluded by outlining some of the issues that it faces.

Proposals are split into generic and specific actions. The generic actions in Section 2 are tied in with general management principles, which could be applied across all of East Northamptonshire Council's conservation areas. The specific actions in Section 3 are informed by the findings of the character appraisal.

1.2 Purpose and Legislative Context

These management proposals set out guidelines by which the special character of Brigstock Conservation Area can be preserved and enhanced. They will provide a basis for preparing new policies to achieve this.

The Council has statutory obligations under Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to prepare management proposals for its conservation areas.

The Audit Commission monitors the management of historic assets by local authorities as part of the overarching Best Value scheme. Best Value performance indicator BVPI 219c was a measure of how many up-to-date (less than five years old) management proposals local authorities have for their conservation areas. This indicator is a driver for best practice in conservation area management and states: *'Public support for conservation areas as places that give identity to people and places is well-established. This indicator will monitor how local authorities are managing their development.'* Although this indicator has now been deleted, the Council considers that up to date management proposals are an important planning tool and remains committed to their production.

1.3 Local Plan and the emerging Local Development Framework

Current planning policies for Brigstock, including those governing development and management of change in conservation areas, are laid out in national, regional and development plan document policies, through the new planning system introduced by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

The conservation area character appraisal and management proposals document will sit alongside relevant policies contained within the development plan and be complementary to its aims of retaining landscape and townscape character and enhancing local distinctiveness.

The current relevant planning documents are:

- The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990;
- Central government guidance, principally as set out in "Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment" and "Planning Policy Guidance 16: Planning and Archaeology".

- The East Northamptonshire District Local Plan (1996) –now mostly superseded by the Joint Core Spatial Strategy for North Northamptonshire (adopted in June 2008);
- The Rural North, Oundle and Thrapston Development Plan (currently under examination)
- Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-regional Strategy (March 2005);
- Regional Spatial Strategy for East Midlands (currently under review).

1.4 Sustainability

The preparation of most of the above documents adheres to the principles of sustainability as it underpins the new planning system. The thorough survey of the conservation area, the subsequent identification and in-depth analysis of special character, and the partnership with the local community in the preparation of the documents all contribute to reaching the targets set for sustainability.

1.5 Consultation

In line with the increased emphasis on community engagement in the LDF, the proposals contained in this document are undergoing full public and stakeholder consultation before being adopted [full details of the public consultation exercise are to be inserted in this document after the public consultation]. East Northamptonshire Council subscribes to the view expressed in the English Heritage document '*Guidance on the management of conservation areas*' (August 2005) that: '*involving the local community in their development is essential if the proposals are to succeed.*'

1.6 Monitoring

East Northamptonshire Council will seek to review these documents every five years; taking into account Government policy and the emerging LDF.

As recommended by English Heritage, a review may include the following:

- A survey of the conservation area including a full photographic survey to aid possible enforcement action;
- An assessment of whether the various recommendations detailed in any conservation area management proposals have been acted upon, and how successful this has been;
- The identification of any new issues which need to be addressed, requiring further actions or enhancements;
- The production of a short report detailing the findings of the survey and any necessary action;
- Publication of an updated edition of management proposals.

It is possible that the local community, under the guidance of a heritage consultant or the Council, could carry out this review. This would enable the local community to become more involved with the process and would raise public consciousness of the issues, including the problems associated with enforcement. The review will monitor the changes that have occurred through the continuous processes of development and through individual changes of use. The purpose is to re-evaluate the special character of a conservation area to reach decisions about whether the area still warrants designation.

2. GENERIC ACTIONS

2.1 Policy

It is the Council's duty to preserve and enhance its conservation areas and policies are included in the Local Plan in order to fulfil this duty. The fundamental principles of these policies will be carried forward to the emerging LDF.

2.2 Other guidance

East Northamptonshire Council has Design Guidance entitled 'Design in Context' (2005). English Heritage and other organisations can provide other guidance, such as specialist information regarding listed buildings, traditional construction methods and materials.

ACTION: The Council will consider preparing and issuing additional design guidance and leaflets as and when appropriate. This may be in response to the continued review of conservation areas in East Northamptonshire or other indicators.

2.3 Development Control Process

The system of considering planning applications for their suitability and conformity with national and local policies is long established and is based on more stringent criteria in conservation areas.

While there are additional policies concerning conservation areas and other parts of the historic environment, it is essential that these policies be applied consistently in the development control process.

Applications concerning land or properties within or close to a conservation area are referred to the Conservation Officer of East Northamptonshire Council. Within the usual period of time for consideration of an application, a conservation specialist will advise the planning officer assigned to the application whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character of the conservation area. The specialist will, therefore, advise on whether the application should be supported or refused on conservation grounds.

As an important figure in this process, the conservation specialist will be trained in the field of historic building conservation and/or planning, either through formal qualifications, long-term experience in the field, or both. The Skills Base Best Value Performance Indicator BVPI205 measures the suitability of persons for this and other specialist roles and East Northamptonshire Council is committed to meeting these criteria for such specialist roles.

Consistency of approach to determining planning applications is at the centre of a fair system of controlling change, especially in conservation areas. Consistent decisions also lead to an improved public perception that the system is fair and, in turn, there is a greater public engagement with the process.

Design and development briefs should be promoted and encouraged as a matter of course on any substantial application in the conservation areas. Due to the significant lack of spare land available for development purposes, any new development is likely to have an impact on the appearance and character of the conservation area. Therefore, there is a clear case for a coherent written argument in favour of the benefits of the proposal at the time of application. This could take the form of a letter,

but ideally would be a more thorough development brief and include mock-up photographs that give an impression of how the proposal would look.

ACTION: The Council will consult a conservation specialist on all development control proposals affecting the character of conservation areas.

2.4 Enforcement Strategy

In some cases the development control process is not fully adhered to and planning permission is not always sought or implemented correctly. In these cases it is important that enforcement action is swift and effective. This will reinforce the message that the development control process is fair and that it must be followed in all cases. Usually, enforcement action does not result in legal action, but is resolved through effective communication between the Council representatives and the relevant party.

2.5 Street Management

While there is a presumption in favour of traditional materials in conservation areas, it is recognised that it is not always practical or financially viable to use traditional materials in large-scale projects. However, it should always be required that consideration is given to the effect that any new introductions to the public realm will have on the character of a conservation area and reasonable efforts be made to preserve that character with minor modifications to design. Also, consideration should be given to the scale of new features, particularly street lights, and 'conservation' alternatives should be requested and considered when embarking on any large scale scheme of public realm replacement.

It is important that the conservation section is consulted early on regarding any proposals to affect material changes to conservation areas. It is often the case that they can bring previous experience, as well a through understanding of the needs of an area, to the process.

ACTION: On all street management schemes affecting the character of conservation areas the Council will consult a conservation specialist and will liaise with the Parish Council and relevant County Council departments, especially Highways.

2.6 Promotion and Awareness

While it is often the conservation section that deals first hand with planning applications and other schemes in conservation areas, almost every department in the Council will deal with matters affecting them in some way. It is the responsibility of every employee to give regard to the special character of conservation areas and promote awareness of them to residents. An active Historic Environment Champion (see below) can be an effective way of encouraging understanding across Council departments.

2.7 Historic Environment Champions/Town or Parish Councils

The Historic Environment Champion is a senior member of the Council, usually an elected member, who is nominated to promote historic environment issues at the highest level of the organisation. The Champion can, therefore, play an important role in raising the profile of conservation in general and ensuring that key strategic decisions are taken with a full consideration of their potential effect on the historic environment. This role will be optimised if the champion has a thorough knowledge of the state of East Northamptonshire Council's historic environment and regular liaison with the conservation section. East Northamptonshire Council already has an Historic

Environment Champion (currently, at October 2008, Councillor John Richardson), and intends retaining the role in the future.

Town or Parish Councils and other local bodies are also useful contributors to the process and are consulted for their opinion of planning applications in their localities. The wealth of knowledge contained within Parish Councils is a valuable resource when identifying local character and strong ties with the conservation section are encouraged.

2.8 Education/community involvement

An active engagement with the local community should be sustained after the consultation over the appraisal and management proposal documents. The documents should be promoted in the community as useful aides in identifying and retaining what is important in their area. This, in turn, should promote a sense of ownership that will foster an improved level of understanding of the importance of preserving and enhancing special character.

ACTION: The Council will seek stronger ties with local bodies and interest groups and promote the continued involvement of the local community in managing and enhancing the character of its conservation areas –in line with the adopted Statement of Community Involvement.

3. SPECIFIC ACTIONS FOR THE BRIGSTOCK CONSERVATION AREA

3.1 Conservation Area boundary review

The present boundary encompasses the historic core of the village very tightly, excluding back lanes, listed buildings, 'positive' historic buildings and landscape features which together make an important contribution to the special interest of Brigstock. A substantial extension to the conservation area to include Park Walk and Bridge Street, and other smaller changes to the boundary, are detailed below:

Additions to the conservation area:

South east: Add properties in Kennel Hill, The Syke, the eastern end of Stable Hill and the beginning of Lyveden Road. This will encompass important listed buildings including Roke House, Lyveden Road (16th century) and no. 2 Lyveden Road, as well as a number of unlisted but 'positive' former barns, stables, and houses. Of note is Yorks Row, an unlisted terrace of cottages dating to c1875, with pretty Gothic windows.

South-west: Add properties along Grafton Road and Park Walk, with the adjoining field. This will include a large number of unlisted 'positive' buildings, some of them in agricultural uses, and the listed no. 16 Park Walk, a very early thatched cottage. The large field between Park Walk, which provides such an attractive setting for the village, will also be included along with a number of mature trees.

North-west: Add Bridge Street and part of High Street. This will bring into the conservation area a number of mainly 19th century unlisted but 'positive' cottages and smaller houses, plus the grade II listed Park Cottage. Harper's Brook will also be included, along with the line of the former mill leat and many mature trees. A listed building (no. 35 High Street) and several unlisted but 'positive' buildings will be added.

North east: Move the current conservation area boundary to the north side of Back Lane and extend it slightly in two places to include the grade II listed former clothing factory (Wallis's Factory) and also to include a row of 19th century 'positive' stone cottages – nos. 18-24 (even) Back Lane.

ACTION: Following public consultation, the Council will amend the conservation area as suggested above.

3.2 Control of unlisted 'positive' houses

The character appraisal for Brigstock has noted how the architectural integrity of some of the unlisted residential properties in the conservation has already to a degree been compromised by the use of modern materials and details such as uPVC windows or front doors, modern roofing materials, the removal of chimney stacks, or the addition of front porches or roof lights. The Council is able, through the imposition of an Article 4 Direction, to make restrictions on the permitted development rights of owners of unlisted single-family dwelling houses in the conservation area. An Article 4 Direction is therefore useful in strengthening controls over the unsympathetic alteration of unlisted buildings, which would cumulatively have an adverse affect on the character of the conservation area.

The setting of these unlisted buildings, often close to listed buildings, adds to the need for additional controls. An Article 4 (2) can be served by the local planning authority without the approval of the Secretary of State and would affect all unlisted family dwellings in the conservation area.

Strict controls already exist over listed buildings, and unlisted buildings in a variety of other uses (such as flats or shops), where Listed Building Consent or Planning Permission is required by statute for a variety of minor alterations.

ACTION: The Council will consider designating an Article 4(2) Direction in order to protect unlisted dwelling houses in the Brigstock Conservation from unsympathetic changes.

3.3 Sites requiring enhancement

The following sites were noted as requiring improvements when the conservation area was surveyed in August and September 2008. Some of them may have already been attended to. Because of the countryside setting to the conservation area, any changes to the spaces between the buildings need to be minimal and carefully controlled to prevent an erosion of the rural character.

- The vandalised telephone kiosk in Stanion Road: This needs to be repaired as soon as possible to prevent the character of the area being down graded;
- Car park to The Three Cocks Public House: Improvements could include raising the stone boundary wall, to reduce the impact of the parked cars on the immediate vicinity, and planting trees around the edges of the car park;
- Back elevation of The Three Cocks Public House, particularly the stainless steel kitchen vent: The back elevations need to be smartened up and in the long term the encapsulation of the stainless steel kitchen vent in a traditional chimney structure would be greatly beneficial;
- Park Walk – eastern end: Simple improvements are needed to the pavement and public open space including new paving, perhaps using traditional materials such as limestone setts, and perhaps some street trees;
- Coop car park: Screening could be provided to hide the unsightly storage bins and other containers relating to the retail use;
- The Village Hall/Doctors' Surgery car park: Improvements could include providing some planting close to the Village Hall, and perhaps reducing the width of the opening from the street;
- Market Cross: The stone paving around the Market Cross needs weeding.

3.4 Public realm

Street Lighting: The street lighting throughout the conservation area is modern, poor quality and overall quite varied, apart from the traditional lamps in the churchyard. Improvements could include replacing the modern standards with wall mounted traditional lamps in the village centre, and replacing the varied modern lights in other parts of the conservation area with one simple modern light, of consistent design.

Paving: The pavements are black tarmacadam, in places with patched repairs. Improvements could include repaving in selected locations with resin bonded tarmacadam, with a brown stone aggregate, which would blend with the limestone buildings.

Wirescape: Throughout the conservation area, trailing wires and dominant timber telegraph poles are detrimental to the character of the area. Improvements would include undergrounding these wires and removing the telegraph poles, in association with new street lighting, as in some places modern street lights are fixed to these poles.

ACTION: The Council will seek to review the condition of street lighting and paving in the public realm to ensure that these are well maintained and fit for purpose. The Council will aim to co-ordinate new paving or other public realm improvements in line with the principles set out in English Heritage's latest 'Streets For All' publication.

3.5 Local List

While many of Brigstock's historic buildings are included on the statutory list ('listed buildings'), some others do not meet the strict criteria for listing but are nevertheless important in the local area. A local list of buildings and structures of local architectural or historic interest in Brigstock and other settlements within the north of the district has been produced by the Rockingham Forest Trust in accordance with local stakeholders; the list is published in the Rural North, Oundle and Thrapston Plan. Buildings in the Brigstock Conservation Area which might also be considered for inclusion on the local list are:

- Former Chapel between High Street and Back Lane;
- Primitive Methodist Chapel of 1843 in Park Walk, now used as the Women's Institute;
- Yorks Row, a late 19th century terrace of estate workers' cottages with attractive Gothic style cast iron windows;
- Nos 4-6 Grafton Road, a pair of early thatched cottages;
- No. 11 Park Walk, a substantial stone farmhouse with 19th century details which may well be much earlier;
- No. 23 Park Walk, another substantial stone house with 19th century details but which may be earlier;
- Barn opposite no. 66 High Street – a very prominent former agricultural building;
- The former Mill House, Mill Lane – altered but historically and socially significant.

ACTION: Buildings in the proposed Brigstock Conservation Area, as detailed above, could be considered for inclusion in the Council's emerging 'Local List':

3.6 Traffic management

The narrow streets and sharp bends in the centre of the village act as a natural 'traffic calmer'. However, the main entrances into the village, where the roads are wider, can be affected by fast moving traffic. Measures to reduce traffic speeds, so long as they are in keeping with the rural environment, would be welcome. This could include simple 'gateways', denoting where the 30 mph speed limits start, although any features would have to be very simple and appropriate to the rural setting. The imposition of a 20 mph speed limit in the village centre might be beneficial.

ACTION: The Council will work in partnership with the County Council and the Police to control excessive traffic speed in the village including consideration for traffic calming measures such as the installation of village entrance 'gateways' or additional speed restrictions.

3.7 Satellite dishes

A number of visible satellite dishes, within the existing and proposed conservation area, were noted during the survey work for this document. The rules governing satellite dishes in conservation areas are significantly tighter than outside such areas and are set out in OPDM Circular 10/2005. This states that for all unlisted buildings in a conservation area, in whatever use and of whatever size, planning permission is required for all 'antennas' (which includes satellite dishes and any other equipment used to deliver electronic communications) which are located on a chimney, wall or roof slope which both face onto, and are visible, from a road. In such cases, planning permission will usually be refused. The rules governing other locations on the building are extremely complex so it is always best to ask the local planning authority if planning permission is required before carrying out the work.

For listed buildings, listed building consent is practically always required for the installation of 'antennas' and if the Council considers that the installation will have an adverse effect on the special architectural or historic interest of the building, consent will usually be refused.

Conventional TV aerials and their mountings and poles are not considered to be 'development' and therefore planning permission is not required.

(See also the DCLG pamphlet, *A Householders' Planning Guide to the Installation of Antennas* available on the DCLG website).

ACTION: The Council will consider taking Enforcement Action to remove unauthorised satellite dishes in the conservation area if negotiations have failed to reach any agreement.

3.8 Protection of views

The protection of the views within the village and across the field next to Park Walk are important. Whilst conservation area designation inherently implies that the Council will protect or enhance the special character of the conservation area, and national and local policies exist to this end, the specific protection of the principal views in the Brigstock Conservation Area is worthy of a special mention in these Management Proposals.

ACTION: The Council will ensure that new development does not have an adverse effect on the 'Important Views' noted on the Townscape Appraisal Map, particularly the views as seen across the field between Park Walk and Harper's Brook.

3.9 Protection of trees and open spaces

The existing open green spaces, and the many trees, in the conservation area, need to be protected for future generations. All trees are protected within conservation areas by the requirement for landowners to notify the Council of their intention to remove, lop or trim them. This provides the Council with a 6 week period in which to assess the tree to see if it makes a special contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area, in which case a Tree Preservation Order may be served on the owner. Once a tree has a TPO served on it, the owner must apply to the Council for permission to carry out any work, which may be refused.

Within the Brigstock Conservation Area, important trees and green spaces are indicated on the Townscape Appraisal Map. It is expected that any development would respect the positive contribution they make to the character of the conservation area, and ensure that they will continue to preserve and enhance the special character of the conservation area.

For the future, the preparation of a Tree Management Plan could identify trees at risk from disease or old age and provide a planned reinstatement programme so that the character of the conservation area is not eroded over time due to the loss of its trees.

ACTION: In partnership with Northamptonshire County Council and the Parish Council, the Council could prepare a Tree Management Plan, identifying all significant mature trees within the conservation area (privately as well as publicly owned) and ensuring that priorities are agreed and funding set aside for the costs involved in remedial works or replacement.

3.10 Control of new development

There are very few opportunities for new development in Brigstock, due to the tight urban form in the centre of the village. However, some gardens may be vulnerable to change and some buildings may at some stage be threatened with redevelopment. A certain amount of infilling has already taken place, some, such as the houses on the north side of the High Street (nos. 24 and 26) successfully replicating the historical form of development within the immediate vicinity. Where new development does occur, it should adhere to policies within the Local Plan, the emerging LDF, and national guidance, most particularly PPG15 and PPG16. In addition:

- The scale and general form of new development should follow established historic precedents;
- New development should blend with the existing historic environment and should not interrupt the skyline;
- New development involving the replacement of an existing building should usually not increase the volume of development on the site;
- 'Positive' unlisted buildings particularly will be protected from demolition or unsympathetic change; any application for demolition must be accompanied by a justification statement, setting out why the building cannot be reused or repaired; also, the applicant must prove that the site or building has been offered for sale on the open market;
- New development should be sympathetic to the surrounding historic buildings in terms of materials and details;
- The roofs and chimneys in the Brigstock Conservation Area are an important part of its special character and new development should reflect the traditional roof forms, pitches, materials and details, of existing historic properties;
- New development within the conservation area should be carefully designed to reduce its impact on existing views, both within and into, the conservation area.

ACTION: The Council will continue to ensure that new development in the Brigstock Conservation Area is of the highest possible quality and that it does not have an adverse impact on the special architectural and historic interest of the area.