

Report of	Meeting	Date
Corporate Director (Business) (Introduced by the Executive Member for Business)	Executive Cabinet	12.02.2009

ST GEORGE'S STREET CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To present the main findings of the St Georges Street Conservation Area Appraisal Management Proposals Document.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

2. To endorse the St Georges Street Conservation Area Appraisal.
3. To adopt the Management Proposals as the basis for future improvement and control of development, subject to the availability of funding.
4. To support the introduction of a Direction under Article 4(1) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 to increase control over additions and alterations in the Conservation Area.
5. To endorse the necessary statutory procedures to introduce an area of Special Advertisement Control and implement the proposed boundary changes.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

6. The St Georges Street Conservation Area Appraisal identifies firstly the key characteristics that make the area special and secondly the key issues that give cause for concern. Whilst it is clear that there are several good characteristics, including some fine buildings, there are a greater number of negative issues that create visual harm. The Appraisal and associated Management Plan highlight the opportunities and challenges for the St Georges Street Conservation Area and recommend a number of objectives and associated projects/actions as a means to enhancing the appearance of the area, which will in turn have a beneficial effect on economic vitality and vibrancy.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

(If the recommendations are accepted)

7. Section 69 of the Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the Council to review areas of special character that it thinks are worthy of preservation and designate them as conservation areas.
8. Section 71 of the Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the Council to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of their Conservation Areas.
9. Members will recall that a Heritage and Conservation Strategy was endorsed at the 8th January executive Committee. It allows a structured and coordinated approach to be taken to conserving and enhancing Chorley's historic environment. In accordance with this, St George's Street Conservation Area review is the first of a programme of reviews of all nine



conservation areas within Chorley. St George’s Street Conservation Area was chosen as a priority as it has not been reviewed since designated in 1985. It is now the first of the conservation areas to have specific Management Proposals formulated.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

10. Do nothing – this would be contrary to statutory guidance and result in the continued decline of the quality of the conservation area. It would undermine two Corporate Strategy objectives; to develop the feel of Chorley as a good place to live, and to strengthen Chorley’s economic position within the Central Lancashire sub-region.
11. Article 4 Direction not approved – this would undermine the conservation area, as its character would continue to be eroded by inappropriate developments currently permitted under permitted development rights.
12. Special Advertisement Control not pursued – this would undermine the conservation area, as its character would continue to be eroded by inappropriate advertisements currently being permitted.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

13. This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

Put Chorley at the heart of regional economic development in the Central Lancashire sub-region	✓	Develop local solutions to climate change.	
Improving equality of opportunity and life chances		Develop the Character and feel of Chorley as a good place to live	✓
Involving people in their communities		Ensure Chorley Borough Council is a performing organization	

BACKGROUND

14. A detailed analysis of St Georges Street conservation area and the development of management proposals, including public consultation, was undertaken early last year. A full copy of the St Georges Street Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Proposals is available in the Members Room for inspection.
15. From this evolved a number of ‘Management Proposals’ recommending further actions including:
 - a. Updating the Council’s ‘Shopfront Design Guide’ and introducing an ‘Area of special advertisement control’.
 - b. Exploring the potential for grant aid to assist with improvements to shopfronts, to help with the reversal of inappropriate alterations to buildings, to help with repairs and appropriate improvements, including the reinstatement of original features for buildings within the Conservation Area;
 - c. The introduction of an Article 4(1) Direction to protect buildings that are not otherwise protected from inappropriate alteration;
 - d. Changes to the conservation area boundary to enhance and further protect its’ setting.
16. **Updating the Council’s ‘Shopfront Design Guide’ and introducing of an ‘Area of Special Advertisement Control’**

Whilst some historic and aesthetically pleasing shopfronts are to be found, they are sadly in the minority. There appears to have been little consistency in terms of design principles or details applied, which has resulted in the current lack of cohesion or sympathy with the buildings. Although uniformity is neither desirable nor appropriate there is a need for a set of broad principles that business owners can be guided by. Updating the Shopfront Design Guide will offer this guidance. Further control of advertisements via the requirement apply for Advertisement Consent can be achieved with the introduction of an area of 'Special Advertisement Control' with reference to the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007.

17. **Exploring the potential for grant aid to assist with improvements to shopfronts, to help with the reversal of inappropriate alterations to buildings, and to help with repairs and appropriate improvements, including the reinstatement of original features for buildings within the Conservation Area**
There is considerable evidence of a lack of basic maintenance and repair of some properties. Programmes of regular, maintenance for buildings are the most cost-effective way of maintaining them in good order. Further advice is available for property owners in joint a publication produced by English Heritage, the Institute of Historic Building and Conservation and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings entitled 'A Stitch In Time'. Offering grant assistance can help owners to maintain their property to the enhanced standard that conservation area designation warrants. This not only enhances the appearance of the area, but also enhances property values.
18. **Introducing an Article 4(1) Direction to protect buildings that are not otherwise protected from inappropriate alteration.**
There is ample evidence within the conservation area and on the fringes of it where inappropriate alterations using unsympathetic materials have been undertaken. The most notable example is the replacement of timber window frames and doors with uPVC or aluminium. In many cases these changes constitute a 'material change' in planning terms, and may therefore require Planning Permission. The introduction of an Article 4(1) Direction will give greater control of extensions and alterations to all unlisted buildings (this includes dwellinghouses, apartments and commercial properties) within the designated area (Listed buildings already enjoy added protection). Offering grant assistance as outlined in section 19 can also help to fund the additional costs associated with an Article 4 Direction.
19. **Changing the Conservation Area boundary to enhance and further protect its setting.**
Although small in number and sited on the periphery of the conservation area, there are several buildings that have a negative impact upon the coherence and character of the conservation area because of their scale, materials or design. There are also a number of neglected open spaces that detract from the area. The extension of the conservation area boundary will give additional control to both new developments and alterations that can seriously impact upon the setting of the area as a whole. The proposed extension will include the following properties:
 - a. 31 Chapel Street (north side)
 - b. 36 – 42 Chapel Street (south side)

20. CONSULTATION

The preparation of the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Proposals has been the subject of comprehensive consultations.

21. A copy of the consultation response report is included in the Appraisal and Management Proposals document.
22. All residents within the conservation area boundary and those just outside it were invited, by letter, to a public exhibition held in March 2007. This was followed by a period of six weeks consultation, including further exhibition displays in Chorley Library. The consultation documents and response questionnaires were available at these exhibitions and also via the Council Website.
23. An information sharing meeting was held with the Corporate Director Business, the Leader of the Council, the Executive Member for Business and the ward councillors for those wards in which the conservation area is located or abuts.
24. Most comments received were either in favour of the report, or where suggestions were made have been considered and wherever possible incorporated into the final version. Comments regarding other agencies or other departments within Chorley Council or Lancashire County Council have been directed to the appropriate individual or department.
25. Whilst it is generally accepted that additional and stronger controls are needed together with updated guidance on specific issues, the need for additional funding in the form of grant assistance is an aspect that is most keenly sought, particularly in times of economic uncertainty.
26. The St George's Street Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Proposals has also been considered and noted by the Local Development Framework working group, as in part it is intended for use as a material consideration by the Development Control Committee when considering applications for development within the conservation area.

IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

27. This report has implications in the following areas and the relevant Corporate Directors' comments are included:

Finance	√	Customer Services	
Human Resources		Equality and Diversity	
Legal	√	No significant implications in this area	

COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

28. The Act requires the Council to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas. The public exhibition in March 2007 appears to satisfy the requirement of Section 71 of the Act to submit the proposals for public consideration.

COMMENTS OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION)

29. There are no financial consequences/issues associated with this report. However, attracting external funding to finance preservation and improvements will be key to achieving the Management Plan.

JANE MEEK
CORPORATE DIRECTOR (BUSINESS)

Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
Ian Heywood	5533	15 January 2009	***

Background Papers			
Document	Date	File	Place of Inspection
	January 2009	***	Copy attached, Council Website