

North Tyneside Council Report to Cabinet Date: 13 January 2014

ITEM 7(d)
Title: Northumberland
Square Conservation
Area Character Appraisal
2014

Portfolio(s): Housing and Environment

Cabinet Member(s): Cllr. John Harrison

Report from Service
Area:

Deputy Chief Executive's Office

Report Author:

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Wards affected:

Riverside and Tynemouth

PART 1

1.1 Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to advise Cabinet of feedback following the public consultation exercise into the draft Character Appraisal for Northumberland Square Conservation Area. Conservation Area Character Appraisals are an assessment of an area's special qualities and character and are used to justify the designation of a particular locality as a Conservation Area. The report also requests that Cabinet adopt the Character Appraisal, attached at Appendix 1, as part of the planning evidence base.

1.2 Recommendation(s):

It is recommended that Cabinet approves the draft Character Appraisal in Appendix 1, incorporating the amendments following consultation as detailed in Appendix 2.

1.3 Forward Plan:

Twenty eight days notice of this report has been given and it first appeared on the Forward Plan that was published on 20 November 2013.

1.4 Council Plan and Policy Framework

1.4.1 The Council Plan

The Authority's Council Plan "Our North Tyneside Plan 2014-18" was adopted by Council at its meeting on the 26th September 2013.

The Authority and North Tyneside Strategic Partnership have agreed that the Our North Tyneside Plan will replace the Sustainable Community Strategy in the future. The Our North Tyneside Plan will not be delivered just by the Authority working on its own. It will need to be a partnership with local people, communities, businesses and other local public sector and voluntary organisations.

The Northumberland Square Conservation Area Character Appraisal will be a mechanism to deliver the following priorities of the Our North Tyneside Plan 2014-18:

1. Our places
 - A. Be places that people like living in and will attract others to either visit or live.
 - B. Have more quality affordable homes.
 - C. Work with residents, communities and businesses to regenerate the borough.

1.4.2 The Authority's Policy Framework

As a piece of evidence, the Character Appraisal will support the implementation of planning policy set out in the Unitary Development Plan. This evidence will also inform the preparation of the emerging Local Plan and, following Local Plan adoption, support the implementation of its policies. The Local Plan will form part of the Development Plan, which is part of the Council's Policy Framework and, as such, is subject to the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure rules.

1.5 Information:

- 1.5.1 This report brings forward an updated Character Appraisal for the Northumberland Square Conservation Area. The Conservation Area was originally designated in 1975 and the current Character Appraisal was adopted by Cabinet in September 2006. This new Appraisal has been prepared in accordance with English Heritage guidance that suggests an update approximately every five years.
- 1.5.2 National planning policy, contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (2012), stresses that Local Planning Authorities should have up-to-date evidence about the historic environment in their area. It also requires local planning authorities to ensure that information relating to the significance of the historic environment, gathered for plan-making or development management purposes, is publically accessible. English Heritage recommends that Character Appraisals should draw out the key elements of the quality and character of the area.
- 1.5.3 Character appraisals define why an area is considered special and worthy of preservation and enhancement. They prove a useful tool therefore, in the development management process for assessing planning proposals in the area and preparing a robust policy framework for the future management of that area. Character appraisals are also a key indicator should it prove necessary to obtain external funding from heritage funders; indeed an adopted character appraisal is typically a requirement of any funding bid. A significant example of the role a character appraisal can play in funding and regeneration is at Fish Quay. Here the character appraisal supported a successful Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) bid that saw Heritage Lottery Fund monies, combining with funding from the Authority, to create a common fund of £1 million. The Appraisal directly informed a Management Strategy for the area, which has been key in guiding development and funding opportunities, including the restoration of the Irvin Building and the Clifford's Fort area.
- 1.5.4 The draft Character Appraisal was made available for public comment between the 4 November and 6 December 2013. The draft Character Appraisal document is at Appendix 1. The details of the consultation process are provided in paragraph 2.3. Four comments were formally received through the consultation exercise and are detailed in full at Appendix 2 to this report, together with a proposed response to each comment. In summary, the comments:

- Support the overall content of the draft Character Appraisal.
- Suggest some minor amendments to either the wording or layout of the document to add to its overall quality (it is proposed these be accepted).
- Demonstrate a commitment from the local business community to get involved in future initiatives regarding the Conservation Area. This is in order to retain its historic character, alongside protecting the long term functional role for businesses and residents.
- Suggest that external funding would be required to maintain the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. This is acknowledged, and the Conservation Area Character Appraisal and separate Conservation Area Management Strategy could be used to secure funding from sources such as the Heritage Lottery Fund.
- Respond to a number of potential initiatives that are raised in the draft Character Appraisal that are suggested for future consideration. It is suggested that these potential initiatives are retained for the present and are explored in further detail when preparing a separate Conservation Area Management Strategy (which itself will be subject to a separate consultation).

1.6 Decision options:

The following decision options are available for consideration by Cabinet:

Option 1

Approve the recommendation set out at 1.2 of the report; or

Option 2

Decide not to adopt the draft Character Appraisal.

Option 1 is the recommended option.

1.7 Reasons for recommended option:

Option 1 is recommended for the following reasons:

- 1.7.1 National planning policy, contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (2012), stresses that local planning authorities should have up-to-date evidence about the historic environment in their area. It also requires local planning authorities to ensure that information relating to the significance of the historic environment, gathered for plan-making or development management purposes, is publically accessible.
- 1.7.2 Character appraisals define why an area is considered special and worthy of preservation and enhancement. They prove a useful tool, therefore, in the development management process, for assessing planning proposals in the area and preparing a robust policy framework for the future management of that area. Character appraisals are also a key indicator should it prove necessary to obtain external funding from heritage funders. In addition it will also be an excellent educational and promotional resource.

1.8 Appendices:

Appendix 1: Draft Northumberland Square Conservation Area Character Appraisal, 2013
Appendix 2: Schedule of responses to consultation.

1.9 Contact officers:

Jackie Palmer, Planning Manager, tel. (0191) 643 6336
Caroline Grist, Planning Officer, tel. (0191) 643 6304
Alison Campbell, Finance Business Manager, tel. (0191) 643 7038

1.10 Background information:

The following background papers/information have been used in the compilation of this report and are available at the office of the author:

- (1) North Tyneside Council Unitary Development Plan, 2002
http://www.northtyneside.gov.uk/browse.shtml?p_subjectCategory=775
- (2) Our North Tyneside Plan 2014-18, 2013
http://www.northtyneside.gov.uk/pls/portal/NTC_PSCM.PSCM_Web.download?p_ID=547987
- (3) English Heritage, Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management, 2011
<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/understanding-place-conservation-area/understanding-place-ca-designation-appraisal-management.pdf>
- (4) National Planning Policy Framework, 2012
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf
- (5) North Tyneside Council, Northumberland Square Conservation Area Character Appraisal, 2006
http://www.northtyneside.gov.uk/pls/portal/NTC_PSCM.PSCM_Web.download?p_ID=224057
- (6) North Tyneside Council Statement of Community Involvement, 2013
http://www.northtyneside.gov.uk/browse-display.shtml?p_ID=224123&p_subjectCategory=811

PART 2 – COMPLIANCE WITH PRINCIPLES OF DECISION MAKING

2.1 Finance and other resources

The Character Appraisal will be available via the Council's website and will also be available in hard copy from the Planning Service. Photocopying costs only will be incurred and are estimated to be not more than £200. They will be met from existing revenue budgets.

2.2 Legal

National planning policy, contained in the National Planning Policy Framework, stresses that Local Planning Authorities must have up-to-date and publically available information relating to the significance of the historic environment.

2.3 Consultation/community engagement

2.3.1 Internal Consultation

A briefing note and copy of the document was sent to Riverside and Tynemouth Ward Members before public consultation began.

2.3.2 External Consultation/Engagement

There is no statutory requirement to consult on character appraisals. In line with the Council's commitment to public participation in the decision making process, the draft Character Appraisal document was available for public consultation between the 4 November and 6 December, in the ways set out below. This approach is also consistent with the requirements of the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (2013) for planning matters.

A letter drop to all properties in the Northumberland Square Conservation Area launched the consultation period, alerting residents to the fact that the draft Character Appraisal was available to be viewed and commented on. The following environmental, planning and heritage bodies were also consulted on the draft Character Appraisal via email: English Heritage, the Environment Agency, Natural England, the Tyne and Wear Specialist Conservation Team, the North of England Civic Trust, the Northumberland and Newcastle Society and the North Shields Chamber of Trade and Commerce. Posters were displayed in the North Shields Customer First Centre, the Friends of Northumberland Square notice board in Northumberland Square, as well as at the YMCA North Tyneside on Church Way. A news article was published in the local press and posted on the North Tyneside Council web homepage. The North Shields Chamber of Trade and Commerce also promoted the consultation through their Twitter page.

The draft Character Appraisal was made available on the Planning team's online consultation portal that allowed for Consultees to view and make comments on the document. It was also available for downloading from the online portal. Hard copies were available to view from the Planning Reception as well as the North Shields Customer First Centre. Copies were also sent by post and email at the request of members of the public.

Suggestions from the consultation have been used to revise the draft Character Appraisal where appropriate. Appendix 2 provides details of the consultation responses and the proposed actions in response.

2.4 Human rights

There are no human rights implications directly arising from this report.

2.5 Equalities and diversity

Proactive steps have been taken to ensure the engagement process has been inclusive.

The document can be translated into alternative languages, and prepared in other formats such as Braille, audiotape and large print. This information is set out on page 7 of the draft Character Appraisal.

Email, telephone, letter and in-person methods of communication were all available to ensure an inclusive consultation process.

2.6 Risk management

The Character Appraisal is a document used to guide planning decisions and is part of the evidence base that underpins planning policy. A significant factual error in the Character Appraisal could therefore lead to legal challenge. Any risks arising will be monitored through the Service's established risk management process.

2.7 Crime and disorder

There are no crime and disorder implications directly arising from this report.

2.8 Environment and sustainability

Conservation Area practice is consistent with the aims of promoting environmental sustainability as it advocates the re-use of buildings along with the use of locally sourced traditional materials. The draft Character Appraisal also encourages sensitive improvements to the area and provides information that can increase the understanding of the historic environment.

PART 3 - SIGN OFF

- Chief Executive X
- Deputy Chief Executive X
- Cabinet Member(s) X
- Chief Finance Officer X
- Monitoring Officer X
- Strategic Manager Policy, Partnerships, Performance and Communications X