

## DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE

6<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2009

### Report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services

**Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (The Principal Act)  
Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (The Act)  
Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (PPG15) Planning and the historic  
environment (1994)**

**Cornforth Conservation Area—Revised Conservation Area Character  
Appraisal &  
Cornforth Conservation Area Management Plan.**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

This report seeks the Committee's approval of the Revised Cornforth Conservation Area Character Appraisal and the Cornforth Conservation Area Management Plan produced recently by appointed consultants in consultation with the Council and the local community.

#### **Introduction**

In 2002 the Council prepared a study of the Cornforth Conservation Area in compliance with Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 which places a duty upon a Local Planning Authority to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are Conservation Areas. Many of the proposals recommended in the study have been implemented and in the light of these enhancements and changes it has become necessary to update the earlier version with a fresh Appraisal and Management Plan. The successful implementation of the proposals has also resulted from a three year Conservation Area Partnership Scheme between English Heritage, Cornforth Parish Council, Durham County Council and Sedgefield Borough Council that began in 2007. This Partnership Scheme is, however, conditional upon there being a revised Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan for Cornforth Conservation Area and an Article 4(2) Direction to cover all the residential properties within the Conservation Area. The Article 4(2) Direction was the subject of a report to this Committee on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2009 and the local community is currently being consulted with a view to it being ratified by full Council in March 2009.

#### **Cornforth Conservation Area Appraisal**

In June 2008 the Council commissioned a firm of consultants to undertake the revised Cornforth Conservation Area Appraisal. The draft Appraisal was the

subject of a public meeting and consultations in July and a healthy array of observations and comments were made by the local community. Although there were a few minor comments and concerns, the majority were positive and all were incorporated into the Appraisal. One major concern that was highlighted related to the presence of unsightly overhead wires across The Green, the undergrounding of which would considerably enhance the Conservation Area but seemed unlikely due to the excessive costs. It was also observed that there were a significant number of properties with inappropriate architectural features which detracted from the expected traditional character of the area. These and other issues raised were, therefore, to become objectives of the Management Plan, thus ensuring that sufficient improvements and enhancements to the public realm and private housing continued in the long term.

The Appraisal also highlighted the appropriateness to extend the current boundary of the Conservation Area to include the north west corner of the medieval boundaries of the settlement and a small area to the south east known as Money's Buildings which form part of the gateway into the Conservation Area.

### **Cornforth Conservation Area Management Plan**

Following on from the successful completion of the Cornforth Conservation Area Appraisal and public consultation in September 2008, the consultants prepared a Management Plan having taken into account the views arising from the consultation exercise.

The aim of the management Plan is to establish the means by which the objectives of preserving and enhancing the unique character and appearance of the Cornforth Conservation area can be pursued through the planning process and the remaining life of the Cornforth Conservation Area Partnership scheme. The Management Plan seeks to address these and other issues by setting out broad planning guidance that can be used by local residents, developers and Council officers alike in considering future development proposals in the conservation area, supported by the local and national policy framework.

The guidance provided in the Management Plan has highlighted two main objectives:-

1. to implement sufficient improvements and enhancements to the public realm and private housing to encourage further long term private investment in the quality and design of the building stock and thus restore historic character.
2. to provide advice on the longer term maintenance of the historic fabric and new development design guidance so that once the Conservation Area Partnership Scheme has ended, the investment can be protected and the process of enhancement continued.

Within these objectives the Management Plan has made several recommendations and have highlighted a number of priorities based on the best use of limited funds available. These priorities include the continuation of the enhancement of the public realm; the restoration of traditional architectural features on the buildings; an endeavour to obtain funding for the undergrounding of the overhead wires; the monitoring of the newly laid car parking lay-byes and an examination of the possibility of extending the current boundary of the Conservation Area as suggested in the Conservation Area Appraisal.

A copy of the revised Conservation Area Appraisal and the Management Plan is attached to the report.

### **Conclusion**

It can be seen from the above that the revised Cornforth Conservation Area Character Appraisal has provided an up-to-date analysis of this special area. Taken together with the recommendations contained in the Management Plan and the recent making of an Article 4(2) Direction which removes certain permitted development rights, this Conservation Area will be placed in a strong position to secure, for the future, its special character which it is desirable to preserve and enhance for the next generation.

### **Recommendation**

That the Committee approves the revised Cornforth Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan.

### **Please Note**

**Copies of the Character Appraisal and Management Plan can be viewed in the Members Rooms.**

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