

THE CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN (4.12.2009)

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Pontefract Market Place Conservation Area Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) forms one element of a number of wider economic regeneration strategies for Pontefract with heritage led regeneration as a core value.

The aims of the THI are to contribute to the social and economic regeneration of the town centre by facilitating the retention and conservation of the existing heritage qualities, support the physical regeneration of the historic buildings, facilitate new uses and to increase awareness of conservation issues within the local community.

The THI aims are shared within the general aims and vision of the Yorkshire and Humber Plan: Regional Spatial Strategy until 2026 (2008), Wakefield Community Strategy (2006), Wakefield Local Development Framework Core Strategy Spatial Vision and Objectives, and Development Policies (2009), the Pontefract Town Centre Masterplan (DTZ, 2009) and The Pontefract Town Centre Partnership Action Plan 2009-2010.

The THI project is the first of a number of related regeneration proposals targeted at Pontefract, which include future schemes for Horsefair, Tanshelf and the Castle which emphasise the value of the historic environment and its ability to act as a catalyst for economic regeneration, encourage participation in future regeneration and enable a wider understanding of local heritage and sense of local identity.

In recent years a number of management groups and proposals have developed to address the social, economic and physical problems in Pontefract. As a consequence there are a number of organisational and community participation opportunities in place through the Pontefract Town Centre Partnership, the Pontefract Community Partnership and the Pontefract Groups Together.

This Conservation Area Management Plan is informed by and builds upon the threats and heritage need identified within the Pontefract Market Place Conservation Area Appraisal document which include a summary of the special interest of the conservation area. The management plan will provide the structure and procedures to address the issues identified and achieve the stated objectives.

2. THE AREA

The conservation value

A full description of the Market Place Conservation Area is provided by The Market Place Conservation Area Appraisal document. The special interest of the area is summarised below:

The Market Place conservation area is the commercial centre of the medieval town of Pontefract. Having developed from the 12th century onwards, the area displays over 800 years of development. The town was particularly significant in the Middle Ages, when it was the fourth largest town in Yorkshire, behind York, Hull and Beverley. Whilst most buildings date from the mid 18th century onwards, many contain much earlier origins. The conservation area is typified by the following:

- *Burgage plot development and survival of medieval yards* – the burgage plots substantially remain in the conservation area revealing the urban grain of the town from the 12th century onwards. Whilst there has been some loss of the burgage plots and their historic boundary walls (particularly west of Liquorice Way), the densely built up character of the medieval town remains. Many yards leading off from main streets also remain, containing subservient development to the main streets;
- *Medieval street pattern* – the layout of the medieval town, and in particular the ‘gates’ and surrounding streets of the castle largely remain;
- *Pedestrianised streets with traditional paving* – the retail centre is largely pedestrianised with the exception of Front Street, Cornmarket, Ropergate, and Liquorice Way. Good quality, natural stone paving has been laid out in this area;
- *Densely built up* - due to the narrow widths of the historic burgage plots, the conservation area is densely built up, albeit with large open spaces for its principal streets;
- *Wide open spaces to Cornmarket, Beastfair and Market Place* - these contrast with the enclosed nature of surrounding streets and densely built up burgage plots;
- *A bustling and thriving market and retail centre;*
- *Predominance of 2 and 3 storey development;*
- *Predominance of red brick, render, stone slate and welsh slate and stone used for important buildings;*

- *Dominance of historic buildings within key views* – St Giles Church's tower is a key feature of the skyline of the town and features in a number of key views around the conservation area. Likewise, Pontefract Town Hall pleasingly terminates the view down Market Place, and the Market Hall stands out as a dominant building.

Existing and potential threats

The special interest of the Market Place conservation area has been undermined in the past by new road construction and substantial loss of historic boundaries and yards. Some redevelopment has failed to reflect the high quality of design seen in the adjacent historic buildings, or has been of a scale at odds with the historic grain here. Horsefair Flats undermines views of the town from the surrounding countryside.

Whilst the Market Place is a thriving retail area at ground floor level, the upper storeys of many buildings are neglected and underused. Many buildings suffer from disrepair, poor maintenance and inappropriate alterations. Those prominent buildings requiring repair include 3 Cornmarket, The Counting House, 10 Market Place, The Red Lion, Belks Court and 17 Cornmarket. A number of shop fronts also require improvement to reflect the historic area in which they sit. Whilst the public realm is generally of excellent quality, there is a need to extend the good quality paving into some of the routes and spaces leading off Market Place.

SWOT Analysis

Based upon the summary of the special interest of the Pontefract Market Place Conservation Area and the recognition of existing and potential issues facing the area, it is possible to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that are present, which are summarised below:

Strengths

- The good occupancy rates at ground level, low number of charity shops and high footfall indicate a thriving retail area with a variety of uses.
- The conservation area has a strong historic character formed by its buildings and spaces, which include a high number of listed buildings.
- Key buildings make a significant contribution to the appearance of the conservation area: the landmark of St Giles' Church, forms a key feature of the skyline of the town and also features in a number of key views around the conservation area, Pontefract Town Hall pleasingly terminates the view down Market Place, and the Market Hall stands out as a dominant building.
- The Market Place is characterised by good quality public realm to the main streets, with areas of new stone paving.

Weaknesses

- The upper floors of many important buildings are in a state of despair and underused. The buildings and spaces to the rear of the main streets are in a poor state of repair.
- A number of inappropriate shop fronts and signage schemes are evident within the conservation area.
- The loss of historic urban grain to the west of Beastfair and Liquorice Way, and to the south of Market Place and Ropergate;
- Some modern development has failed to respect the scale and urban grain of the conservation area.
- The quality of public realm is predominantly poor outside the main streets.
- The Horsefair Flats undermines the skyline to the east of the conservation area.

Opportunities:

- There are a number of vacant and underused upper floors with the potential for re-use.
- Large areas of land to west of Beastfair have potential for both new development and enhancement.

Threats

- The impact of de-industrialisation of the area, the current economic climate are likely to contribute to the continued lack of investment in repairs and a further deterioration of the important historic buildings.
- The potential for further inappropriate new development which fails to consider historic urban grain, scale and design of the area.
- The lack of investment in repairs resulting in a further loss of medieval yards, burgage plots and historic boundaries.
- The blocking of key views into the conservation area with new development outside the boundary.
- The potential threat of standard designed highway works which could undermine the quality of the public realm.

Objectives of the management plan

1. To promote the preservation and enhancement of the historic buildings and public spaces that contribute to the sense of community, identity and quality of life of the local community.
2. To promote sustainable development through the engagement of owners, the provision of training in traditional skills to enable the maintenance and re-use of existing buildings and attain high standards of repair through the use of original, natural materials.
3. To create a quality, attractive environment to attract new investment for development and commercial enterprise, create employment opportunities, increase prosperity and raise the quality of life for the Town's residents and visitors.

4. To use the historic environment to facilitate community engagement and co-operation, develop an awareness of the unique identity, value and quality of the historic environment.

3. PLANNING POLICIES

The THI bid will be a central component of a comprehensive strategy for Pontefract by aiming to improve the built environment and to act as a catalyst for social and economic regeneration. The THI is considered to be an opportunity to extend the regeneration benefits to some of the buildings and public spaces that are under threat and to market the attributes of the Market Place, improve the historic built environment for the local community and stimulate investment confidence.

The special architectural and historic interest of the Pontefract Market Place is recognised by the designation of conservation area status in May 1969 for the area within the THI boundary. This status provides additional planning control and protection of the designated area under national and local planning policies and practices:

National policy

Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 imposes a duty on local planning authorities to designate as conservation areas any 'areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. Section 71 of the Act places a duty for local planning authorities to formulate proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas. Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment is the key national guidance relating to conservation areas. This states that policies will need to be developed which clearly identify what it is about the character of an area which should be preserved or enhanced, and set out the means by which that objective is to be achieved. Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Planning and Archaeology is also relevant here, given the early origins of the town and potential for archaeological remains.

Regional Policy

The Yorkshire and Humber Plan Regional Spatial Strategy (until 2026) Policy ENV9: Historic Environment states that The Region will safeguard and enhance the historic environment, ensure that historical context informs decisions about development and regeneration, with specific reference to former industrial landscapes, housing areas and civic buildings of note, especially in West and South Yorkshire.

Local policy

Part of the Wakefield Council Unitary Development Plan First Alteration (2003), together with Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy and Development Policies Document (adopted 15th April 2009) form the statutory development plan and policies for Wakefield District and include the spatial vision, the strategic development strategy and strategic policies.

Heritage forms an overarching theme that cuts across a number of the objectives of the LDF, which acknowledges Wakefield's numerous and extensive historic and natural assets, the significant contribution they make to the identity of the district and to the quality of life of its residents and their attraction for visitors to the district. The following policies within the LDF are relevant to the Market Place conservation area (full details can be found in the appendix):

- CS 10: Design, Safety and Environmental Quality
- D8: Landscape Character
- D9: Design of new development
- D10: Extensions and alterations to dwellings
- D12: Landscape Design
- D16: Advertisements & Shop Front Design
- D17: Development affecting archaeological sites
- D18: Development affecting historic locations
- D19: Development affecting buildings of local interest

The Council is committed to implementing the above national, regional and local policies within the conservation area.

Specific Market Place Conservation Area guidance

There is a need for specific planning policies for the Market Place conservation area. These follow from the heritage need identified within the conservation area appraisal. It is not possible to adopt the appraisal and management plan as a supplementary planning document (SPD) in its own right, but it is intended that this and other appraisals will ultimately form a suite of documents under a Heritage Strategy SPD:

General

G1	The conservation area will be reviewed on a regular basis and the character appraisal and management proposals updated where necessary. A dated, photographic record will be carried out at this time to monitor change.
G2	A buildings at risk study will be carried out and building owners notified of maintenance and repair works required to their properties. Statutory action will be used, where necessary to ensure buildings are adequately maintained.
G3	All buildings, views, open space and trees which contribute to the character of the

	conservation area shall be protected and enhanced.
G4	The introduction of new uses to upper floors of buildings, particularly residential use, will be positively encouraged.

Development

D1	Key views into and within the conservation area shall be carefully considered, and in particular key views of St Giles' Church.
D2	There shall be a presumption in favour of retaining buildings that make a positive contribution to the conservation area. Any proposals for such demolition should address the criteria for demolition set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment.
D3	There shall be a presumption in favour of retaining historic burgage plot boundaries, and development within rear yards shall be subservient to development along the principal, historic streets.
D4	The linear form of the historic yards to the west of Beastfair and Liquorice Way shall be reinforced in any new development.
D5	The historic significance of Baxtergate should be reinstated in any future development of its area, with development fronting Baxtergate.
D6	New development and extensions to buildings shall be of a scale and design that reinforces the historic character and appearance of the conservation area.
D7	Original architectural detailing including joinery, roofing materials, and chimneys shall be retained and repaired wherever possible. Where replacement of such features is necessary, these should copy the original.

Shop fronts and signage

S1	The Wakefield Shop Front Guidance shall be followed;
S2	Where historic shop fronts remain, they should be retained and repaired in situ
S3	Fascias shall not comprise more than 20% of the overall height of a shop front
S4	Internal illumination within building signage should be avoided wherever possible. Where illumination is considered necessary, the limited use of small spotlights,

	well designed trough lighting, or on occasion halo lighting may be acceptable;
S5	Banners on buildings should be avoided.

Public realm

PR1	There should be a presumption in favour of retaining historic floor surfaces.
PR2	Repair and replacement of stone paving and curbing should be on a like for like basis.
PR3	Street furniture, including street lighting, should be of a standard, durable design and sensitively and rationally located in order to avoid street clutter
PR4	Wherever possible, opportunities should be taken to combine CCTV and street lighting in combined units, in order to avoid street clutter. Opportunities to attach lighting and CCTV to buildings within appropriately designed units, should be taken wherever possible.

4. PLANNING MEASURES

In addition to the planning policies outlined above, there is a need to use additional planning measures in order to safeguard and enhance the special qualities of the conservation area.

Enforcement Action

A buildings at risk and unauthorised works survey is currently being carried out for Market Place conservation area. When the survey is complete, an enforcement strategy will be produced in order to address breaches of planning control. The strategy will take an holistic view of the issues facing the conservation area and seek to work in conjunction with regeneration partners, local civic groups and businesses to address these issues. Where appropriate, the Council will take enforcement action against unauthorised development.

Use of Urgent Works, Repairs and Amenity Notices

The Council will consider the use of its statutory powers under sections 48 and 54 of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) 1990 and section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, in order to address buildings in disrepair and which adversely affect the amenity of the area. These powers will be considered in conjunction with opportunities for grant funding offered by the Townscape Heritage Initiative, and wider regeneration opportunities.

Use of Section 106 agreements

Where appropriate, consideration will be given to the use of legal agreements with local developers in order to secure improvements to the conservation area, such as public realm enhancement.

5. FRAMEWORK FOR DESIGN STANDARDS AND MAINTENANCE

In addition to the specific guidance on Market Place conservation area (see above), a framework for design and maintenance standards will be implemented to ensure that there are mechanisms in place to secure the long term preservation and enhancement of the conservation area. In addition to producing guidance for alterations, repair and maintenance, a programme of community engagement and training with local contractors will be implemented.

Wakefield Shop Front Guide

Wakefield Shop Front Guide has been developed to promote and improve the quality of shop fronts within the Wakefield District. The document provides guidance to help raise the quality of the design and construction of a new shop front over and above the standard required to meet statutory requirements. The guidance encourages well designed, high quality proposals that are sensitive and make a positive contribution to their environment. The guidance is a material consideration in planning applications of this type.

Maintenance & Repair Guidance

A maintenance and repair guide for conservation areas and listed buildings will be produced. This will provide guidance to property owners, tenants and members of the public on the importance of regular maintenance and how historic buildings in the area should be repaired.

Public realm standards

The main areas of the public realm within the conservation area including the Cornmarket, Beastfair and Market Place are laid out with good quality, natural stone paving. There is recognition of the importance of maintaining and further developing this aspect of the conservation area. A set of public realm standards will be produced to guide alterations and maintenance of the public realm. This will involve close collaboration with Wakefield Council Highways Maintenance and Cleansing Officers.

6. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

An inclusive training and education programme is considered to be a key element within the THI management plan and to provide for the long term sustainability of the THI and its objectives. A high quality skills training and education programme will involve owners, the local construction industry and the community.

The owners of the key buildings are important partners in the future development of the buildings within the THI. The consultation process will develop initial relationships with property owners, the training programme will involve the development of activities and materials that will enable the

owners to appreciate the virtues of the buildings within their ownership and strategies for their future repair and maintenance observing best conservation practice.

The training programme will involve the inclusion and engagement of local communities and will involve schools, associations and groups with the aim of cultivating an appreciation, understanding of, and participation in the heritage environment. This process has been initiated by the publicity and consultation activities undertaken as a result of the adoption of the conservation area appraisal and the discrete activities and events relating to the THI scheme.

The local construction industry will require specific traditional skills training to respond to the increased demand for traditional skills as a result of the grant-led projects. Conditions will be placed on grant-led projects to ensure that contractors have or will undertake specific skills training so work undertaken is in accordance with best conservation practice. A number of nationally recognised training providers of high quality training and education in heritage construction skills will provide specialist training opportunities.

The training plan will:

- Identify the practical skills required for the delivery of the THI scheme.
- Identify the key stakeholders within the project, the community and the construction industry.
- Identify the requirements of owners and the local community.
- Identify how potential skill shortages will be met.

7. CONSULTATION AND INVOLVEMENT

The adoption of the conservation area appraisal and the work undertaken as a result of the THI scheme will have laid the foundation for the future involvement of the local community with the management of the conservation area. This work and future activities align with the Wakefield Council Statement of Community Involvement which sets out how communities will be involved in the planning process and ensures that Wakefield Council communicates with, listens to and involves citizens in the planning and decision making of their community and its environment. Activities for the publicity and consultation of the Stage II bid included publicity events, presentations, workshop, educational programme for local schools and one-to-one meetings with members of the local community.

The management consultation activities run parallel with, and compliment the education and training activities outlined in the previous section. The involvement of the property owners is imperative to the success of the THI, the successful management of the THI. It will also be important to harness the interest of major landowners and businesses in the area, such as

Haribo, Wakefield District Housing, Tesco, Morrisons and UK Coal. The implementation of public realm standards will likewise require consultation and partnership with utility companies and the Council's street lighting contractors, Amey. The achievement of the objectives requires the consultation of all members of the local community to ensure a conservation-led approach to the management of the THI area in the future.

There are a number of formal local consultative groups within Pontefract which encourage local participation in the management of the area. These groups include the Pontefract Town Centre Partnership, Pontefract Groups Together, The Pontefract Community Partnership and Pontefract Civic Society are community based groups consisting of members of the public, councillors, representatives of Wakefield Council, representatives of associations and business groups. Initial consultations have shown widespread support of the THI scheme.

8. PUTTING THE MANAGEMENT PLAN INTO PRACTICE

A THI team and organisational structure has been established to support both the development of the THI scheme and to put the management plan into practice. The Team includes a dedicated THI Project Officer, Partnership Development Manager, Conservation Officers and Project Officer (Major Projects).

The established Pontefract Steering Group will oversee the development of projects within Pontefract, including the THI projects. The partners within the Steering Group include: Wakefield Council's Regeneration, Culture and Sport Portfolio Holder, Wakefield Council's Corporate Director: Regeneration, Culture and Sport, Wakefield Council's Service Director: Planning, representative of Pontefract Groups Together, representative of Pontefract Town Centre Partnership, Wakefield Council elected Members of Ward 12 (Pontefract North) and Ward 13 (Pontefract South), Yorkshire Forward, Wakefield District Housing, English Heritage and Wakefield Council Officers representing Urban Neighbourhood Renaissance, Major Projects, Planning, Finance, Planning Conservation, Cultural Services and Highways.

The THI Project Officer will be recruited to implement the management plan, carry out the consultation, education and training activities, disseminate guidance, contact and support the owners of eligible properties, financial management of the scheme and project evaluation and review. The Conservation Team will be responsible for producing the maintenance and repair guide and public realm standards.

Measure	Date of implementation	Organisations involved
Specific Market Place policies adopted	April 2010 when appraisal and management plan adopted	Major projects and Conservation following consultation with Council

		departments and public consultation
Enforcement & Buildings at risk survey	January 2010	Planning Enforcement
Enforcement Strategy	April 2010	Planning Enforcement, Conservation, Major Projects with consultation with local groups
Use of Urgent Works, Repairs & Amenity Notices	2010 onwards	Conservation, Planning Enforcement & Major Projects
Production of Repair & Maintenance Guidance	December 2010	Conservation
Production of public realm standards	December 2010	Major Projects & Conservation in collaboration with Highways, Street Cleansing

Measuring the success of the management plan

The evaluation of the management plan will be based upon a number of established performance indicators to measure the achievements of the scheme in relation to the objectives of the THI management plan. These measurements will require a number of baseline measurements to be undertaken during the preparation of the Stage II bid and will form part of the consultation process.

Identified indicators will include:

Number of buildings at risk

Number of buildings at risk repaired

Number of properties developed without relevant consent or permission

Number of construction industry professionals undertaking skills training

Number of owners attending awareness sessions

Number of and content of returned feedback forms, post training or educational activities

Number of local suppliers used for eligible projects

Amount of additional floor space brought into use

Number of jobs created as a result of additional floor space and changes of use

End of project evaluation / questionnaire responses

Commitment to the management plan

It is intended that the conservation area appraisal and management plan will be formally adopted by the Council by the end of April 2010. It will then become a corporate document and material consideration on planning applications.