

CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISALS

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PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform Members of the purpose and role of Conservation Area Appraisals (CAAs) which support the Local Planning Authority in fulfilling its statutory obligation to protect its conservation areas from development that would harm their character, and to support a case of mitigation to protect the conservation area from any harm arising because of the development of Moorside.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Local planning authorities have a statutory duty to identify those parts of their area that merit conservation area status and, once designated, to periodically review them.
- 1.2 The designation of a conservation area gives the Local Authority the responsibility to protect its conservation areas from development that would harm their character. The Local Planning Authority (LPA), therefore, needs to know what makes up an area's special character and this is identified in a character appraisal, the preparation of which normally precedes designation.
- 1.3 Of Copeland's eight conservation areas, however, the only appraisal undertaken in recent years is that of Whitehaven's Town Centre, which was carried out by independent consultants in 2009 and resulted in the re-designation of the Town Centre Conservation Area following its amalgamation with the High Street Conservation Area.
- 1.4 Three CAAs have been produced covering Beckermeth, Whitehaven Corkickle and Whitehaven Town Centre conservation areas. All three CAAs can be referred to in appendices one to three of this report.

2.0 THE NEED FOR ADDITIONAL APPRAISALS

- 2.1 Recent proposals to site a new nuclear power station at Moorside to the immediate south of the conservation village of Beckermest has given rise to concerns that without a character appraisal for the conservation area.
- 2.2 The LPA required further necessary information about the special architectural and historic interest of the settlement to be able to put forward a case of mitigation to protect the conservation area from any harm arising because of the development of Moorside.
- 2.3 The development of Moorside could also have an impact on land immediately to the south of Whitehaven town centre, where proposals have been put forward to site ancillary accommodation for the workforce needed to construct the power station and associated infrastructure.
- 2.4 This area of land is overlooked by the Corkickle Conservation Area and the southern part of the Whitehaven Town Centre Conservation Area, as such, these two areas also need to be appraised to record their special and individual characteristics in order to protect them from any development which may be considered harmful.

3.0 PREPARATION OF APPRAISALS AND PUBLIC CONSULTATION

- 3.1 Due to the lack of staff resources and the need for transparency, tenders were sought from independent heritage consultants with the required level of experience, and the successful tenderer had previously completed some 16 appraisals both in Cumbria and in and around Aberdeen.
- 3.2 The appraisals were prepared following a detailed assessment of each of the settlements using Historic England's 2016 guidance on the production of conservation area character appraisals.
- 3.3 Although LPAs are not committed to publicising the production of appraisals, nevertheless once the draft appraisals had been completed and press notices issued, a public consultation was held in Beckermest.
- 3.4 Due to the lack of suitable facilities, the residents of Corkickle and the southern part of Whitehaven Town Centre were given the opportunity to view the documents instead at the Council's Service Centre, on the Council's media sites and in Whitehaven's library.

3.5 The feedback we received was limited to a few responses from some of Beckermets residents.

3.6 The draft documents were subsequently reviewed and finalised and are now available on the Council's website. They will form part of a suite of documents which will help to guide both officers and councillors in deciding the outcome of future planning applications and assist developers in considering what impact their proposals may have on a conservation area's wider character.

3.7 The documents will also help to better inform residents when commenting upon proposed developments that may affect their conservation area.

4.0 CONCLUSION

4.1 Members have been informed of the purpose and role of Conservation Area Appraisals (CAAs) which support the Local Planning Authority in fulfilling its statutory obligation to protect its conservation areas from development that would harm their character and to support a case of mitigation to protect the conservation area from any harm arising because of the development of Moorside.

APPENDICES

- Appendix One: Beckermets Conservation Area Appraisal
- Appendix Two: Corkickle Conservation Area Appraisal
- Appendix Three: South Whitehaven Area Appraisal