

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities held at
10.00 am on Wednesday, 9 March 2022

Present:

Members: Councillor D Welsh (Chair)

Other Members Present (by invitation): Councillor L Bigham (Chair of Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4)
Councillor J Birdi (for item 36 below)
Councillor B Gittins (for item 37 below)
Councillor T Jandu (for item 36 below)
Councillor S Keough (for item 36 below)
Councillor A Tucker (for item 37 below)

Employees Present: D Butler, Planning and Regulation
M Bajway, Law and Governance
U Patel, Law and Governance
C Styles, Planning and Regulation

Apologies: Councillors R Bailey and M Lapsa (Shadow Cabinet Members)
Councillor K Sandhu (for item 37 below)

Public Business

35. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

36. Proposed Brownhill Green Conservation Area - Public Consultation

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Streetscene and Regulatory Services which sought approval to undertake public consultation on the proposed Brownhill Green Conservation Area.

The proposed Brownhill Green Conservation Area was a commitment made in the Local Plan at Policy HE1 and draft documentation has now been produced to progress this.

A Conservation Area recognises the unique characteristics of an area and seeks to protect and enhance these. An Area Appraisal and Management Plan have been developed to this end and subject to approval from the Cabinet Member, public comment was now sought on both documents.

In order to ensure that specific matters would be considered in the context of the Appraisal and Management Plan, limited changes to Permitted Development rights were being proposed, via an Article 4 Direction, which would result in planning applications being submitted in these circumstances.

Following site walks and character analysis of Brownhill Green, the defining special characteristics have been identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal which, alongside the Management Plan serve as an evidence base against which to test any future development proposals within the area. The documents were attached to the report as Appendix 1 and 2 respectively.

It should be noted that the proposed designation is located beside an established housing allocation, and whilst not therefore in conflict with this allocation, the designating of the conservation area should serve to further inform best possible design outcomes in due course.

Alongside the draft Appraisal and Management Plan, a draft Article 4 Direction would be included within the consultation, resulting in a proposed removal of some elements Permitted Development rights to ensure applications are made to the planning authority for works which may affect the special character of the conservation area. These applications would then be determined in accordance with national and local policy, including the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan.

It should be noted that as part of the public consultation of an article 4 Direction it is appropriate to establish the implementation date of said Direction. It was proposed that the Direction come into force on 1 July 2022, with the caveat that should the public consultation vary the nature of the Conservation Area or Article 4, that this date may be moved to a later date with Cabinet approval but may not be made sooner.

Brownhill Green falls within Bablake Ward of the city and Ward Councillors J Birdi, T Jandu and S Keough attended the meeting for the consideration of this item. All three ward councillors welcomed the Conservation Area proposals and sought clarifications on a number of issues including housing allocation/development within area, coverage of the proposed conservation area, classification and inclusion of land and properties and close border discussions.

The Cabinet Member welcomed the discussion and was pleased that this was being progressed and stressed that while it would not stop development, developers would have to consider their proposals with the conservation area in mind. He encouraged ward councillors and residents to respond to the consultation as the purpose of this was to identify and protect the land with the most characteristics.

A report on the outcome of the consultation seeking approval to the designation of the area would be submitted to Cabinet in due course.

RESOLVED that, the Cabinet Member having considered the report and the discussions at the meeting, approves a public consultation, for six weeks during March and April 2022, on the Brownhill Green Conservation Area proposal.

37. **Proposed Earlsdon Conservation Area - Public Consultation**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Streetscene and Regulatory Services which sought approval to undertake a public consultation on the draft Earlsdon Conservation Area proposal.

The intention to consider the Earlsdon district of the city for conservation area status was included in the Coventry City Local Plan at Policy HE1 and draft documentation had now been produced to progress this and was ready for public consultation.

In order to ensure that specific matters would be considered in the context of the Appraisal and Management Plan, limited changes to Permitted Development rights were being proposed, via an Article 4 Direction, which would result in planning applications being submitted in these circumstances.

Community workshops were held in 2016 to seek the views of local people in identifying the special characteristics of the area, and to highlight issues which were seen to require control in order that the special character of the area was retained for future generations. In addition, site walks were also undertaken with the Ward Councillors.

Following this, a Conservation Area Appraisal and a Management Plan were produced based on the findings to develop a sound evidence base on which future development proposals may be assessed to ensure responsiveness to the local context. These draft documents were attached to the report as Appendix 1 and 2 respectively and were ready for public consultation.

Alongside the draft Appraisal and the draft Management Plan, a draft Article 4 was included at Appendix 3 to the report. The implementation of this Direction would result in a proposed removal of elements of Permitted Development Rights to ensure applications are made to the planning authority for works which may affect the special character of the conservation area. These applications would then be determined in accordance with national and local policy, including the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan.

As with the previous report, it should be noted that as part of the public consultation of an Article 4 Direction, it is appropriate to establish the implementation date of the said Direction. It was proposed that the Article 4 Direction come into force on 1 July 2022, with the caveat that should the public consultation vary the nature of the Conservation Area or Article 4, that this date may be moved to a later date with Cabinet approval but may not be made sooner.

In seeking to progress the Earlsdon Conservation Area designation as per the commitment within the Local Plan, approval was sought to progress to public consultation prior to the anticipated adoption. Consultation was proposed for six weeks, in line with Council's Statement of Community involvement.

Councillors B Gittins and A Tucker, Earlsdon Ward councillors who attended the meeting for the consideration of this item, thanked and praised officers on the community engagement with the residents and the walk abouts in the area.

They raised the following points:

- The need to consider the broad ranging properties within the area, from exclusive properties, to first time buyer properties purchased with a view to refurbishment
- Regeneration and pedestrianisation of High Street would need to be sympathetically undertaken
- The need for the different service areas of the Council working in the area to liaise with each other to ensure everyone was working to the same end goal
- Consideration would need to be given to the weaving and watch making quarter which was just over the proposed conservation area border.
- Consideration needed to be given to the impact of empty shops and their refurbishment
- Consideration of traffic management/cycle lanes/light rail and how these would impact the built environment in the area

Other members present enquired about the size of a conservation area as there were individual properties in areas that have a more fluid community and residents who were less likely to come forward and engage in such proposals; unlike Earlsdon which has a more settled community. It was explained that in these circumstances, a local listing may be more appropriate.

The Cabinet Member thanked everyone for their useful comments and reiterated the need to encourage residents to engage with the consultation. He added that existing conservation areas would be revisited and areas where communities were less likely to engage would be included for consistency. The consultation would be available on the Council's website and displayed in libraries etc.

A report on the outcome of the consultation seeking approval to the designation of the area would be submitted to Cabinet in due course.

RESOLVED that, the Cabinet Member having considered the report and the discussions at the meeting, approves a public consultation for six weeks during March and April 2022, on the Earlsdon Conservation Area proposal.

38. **Introduction of Council Blue Plaque Scheme**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Streetscene and Regulatory Services which sought approval to the introduction of a city-wide Blue Plaque Scheme.

The report outlined a proposal to introduce a heritage plaque nomination scheme (commonly known as a Blue Plaque Scheme), to be hosted via the Coventry City Council website, inclusive of associated administration and element of financial support for successful nominations.

In the past, commemoration plaques had been erected in the city on an individual basis, and/or alongside the support of local historical societies, as well as the City Council, and add greatly to the cultural and heritage offer of the city.

Although the City Council has not had a formal scheme in place for many years, such proposals were often brought to the Council's heritage team as enquiries regarding the due process of nomination and installation.

In this context, the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities asked officers to draw up a best-practice scheme and liaise with stakeholders regarding the Council the re-introduction of a Council-led Blue Plaque scheme. The aim being to complement the existing, valued efforts of organisations, and to provide a route to plaque installation that varied from the pre-existing processes.

Following this process, officers drafted a route to nomination of commemorative plaques via the Local Authorities website, in order to establish this as the formal path for such proposals whilst introducing an assessment and recommendation process, supported by the Local Authorities heritage specialists. Final details were proposed to be delegated to the Head of Planning Policy and Environment, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing, but would adhere to Historic England best practice whilst promoting and celebrating the diversity of heritage within the city.

However, it should be noted that a key component would be an element of public voting on Plaques to take forward, allowing a wide range of voices to be heard, reflecting the diversity of heritage within the city, and ensuring that was reflected in the Blue Plaques being installed.

Alongside the introduction of a nomination platform for commemorative plaque proposals, the council's heritage team would concurrently be engaging in an audit of existing plaques in the city, in order to inform future recommendations in regard to levels of existing representation.

Furthermore, it was proposed that the development of an appropriate scheme for the promotion and management of two annual Coventry City Council supported heritage plaques, thereby ensuring that the financial cost of production and installation would not be a barrier to any specific person or even being commemorated with a Blue Plaque.

It should be noted that the establishment of the scheme would not preclude the erection of commemorative plaques outside of the Council's nomination process, and the Council would continue to work positively with organisations seeking to install Plaques where appropriate.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member, having considered the report:

- 1. Approves the introduction of a city-wide Blue Plaque Scheme.**
- 2. Delegates to the Head of Planning Policy and Environment, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities, to finalise the details of the process.**

39. **Outstanding Issues**

There were no outstanding issues.

40. **Any other item of public business which the Cabinet Member decides to take as matters of urgency because of the special circumstances involved**

There were no other items of business.

(Meeting closed at 11.35 am)