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Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities

24<sup>th</sup> February 2023

**Name of Cabinet Member:**

Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities – Councillor D Welsh

**Director Approving Submission of the report:**

Director of Streetscene and Regulatory Services

**Ward(s) affected:**

St Michael's Ward

**Title:**

Local Listing Nomination Report – Charles Ward and George Eliot Building

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**Is this a key decision?**

No

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**Executive Summary:**

Nominations have been received for additions to the local list of heritage assets, which if approved, would introduce additional considerations in the assessment of planning applications where such designations are affected.

Further to receipt of a nomination for the addition to the local list of The Charles Ward and George Eliot buildings, public consultation was undertaken between the 3<sup>rd</sup> August and the 14<sup>th</sup> September 2022 and the recommendation upon the nomination is now made.

**Recommendation:**

The Cabinet Member is requested to:

- 1) Decline the nominations for the Charles Ward and George Eliot Building to be added to the local list, for the reasons set out in the report.

**List of Appendices included:**

Appendix One - Charles Ward and George Eliot buildings Local Listing Public Consultation Report

**Background papers:**

Cabinet Member Report – 28<sup>th</sup> July 2022

**Other useful documents**

CCC Local Listing Process Note

**Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?**

No

**Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?**

No

**Will this report go to Council?**

No

## Report title: Local Listing Nomination – Charles Ward & George Eliot Building

### 1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 A public nomination for addition to the local list of The Charles Ward and George Eliot buildings has been received and reviewed by the City Council. Further to review, and confirmation that the application received fulfilled the necessary information requirements and was therefore valid, public consultation on the nomination was undertaken between the dates of the 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2022 and the 14<sup>th</sup> September 2022. The report following makes recommendation to the Cabinet Member regarding the proposed addition to the local list of the nomination, further to an examination of the findings of public consultation, review of planning context, and desktop research findings.
- 1.2 The Nomination is located immediately to the boundary of the Hill Top Conservation Area, with a small element of the nomination shown within the defined boundary of the Conservation Area, the site is also directly within the setting of the Grade II listed Coventry Central Baths. The case for nomination was presented in a draft report for public consultation, this is included at appendix one of this report.
- 1.3 Given this immediate proximity, and part inclusion within the Conservation Area, alongside the immediate setting of the Grade II Coventry Swimming Baths, these structures would currently benefit from Conservation Officer oversight in any forthcoming planning application.
- 1.4 Policy HE2 of the Local Plan builds upon principles of sustaining historic character, seeking to conserve and enhance those aspects of the historic environment which are recognised as being of special historic, archaeological, architectural, artistic, landscape or of townscape significance, where part 1(e) further states that “ *Other places, spaces, structures and features which may not be formally designated but are recognised as significant elements of Coventry’s heritage and are positively identified on the Coventry Historic Environment Record* ”
- 1.5 The most recent planning application in respect of the nominated buildings is that of 2021/2316 – ‘Advertisement consent for 1no Fascia banner advertisement’. Previous to this the buildings have also had applications made in respect of the addition of signage, and notably approved external alterations to elevations and lobby entrance at the Charles Ward Building.
- 1.6 The nomination for assessment of inclusion to the local list of heritage assets was valid, and therefore progressed to public consultation stage aside internal review, the findings from this public consultation were limited, however demonstrated a balance in favour of the addition to the Local List.
- 1.7 Whilst the nomination is inclusive of the two buildings, there are distinct differences in both scale and architectural elevational arrangement between the George Eliot and Charles Ward buildings. The more modestly scaled Charles Ward Building demonstrates a larger secondary scale and more overt gridded elevational arrangement than is seen in the case of the larger, seven storey George Eliot building.
- 1.8 Historic England’s ‘making of a modern city’ notes the architectural arrangement to be “*clad with glass and painted steel panels, set between regularly spaced projecting steel I-beam mullions*”. The Charles Ward building currently offers some continuity in architectural arrangement to that of the Priory building to the West, and formerly to that of the James Starley building which was consented for demolition and introduction of Starley Gardens aside Cox Street.

- 1.9 The George Eliot building meanwhile, demonstrates a divergence from this elevational treatment, employing a tighter gridded arrangement which delivers a greater sense of verticality, and indeed variation in materiality delivering a more solid form in sections of the design. More recent single and two storey extensions of red brick are also present which are not seen as being of heritage value are noted to have been added toward the inner courtyard of the campus.
- 1.10 It is also noted that the Charles Ward Building delivers a greater elevational interface with the Grade II Listed Coventry Swimming Baths, whilst significantly contributing to the enclosure and definition of the pedestrian route connecting Priory Street to Cope Street.
- 1.11 The nomination is for consideration of both the Charles Ward building and the George Eliot building to be added to the local list of heritage assets, of these two buildings, the Charles Ward building is seen to demonstrate a clearer narrative to the architectural design principles of the campus, alongside which the George Eliot building is noted as having some erosion of design through later extensions.
- 1.12 Both buildings benefit from a historic narrative in respect of the campus in the context of the wider post-war regeneration of the city, however a large proportion of this narrative may be seen to be in the social principles embedded in situating a place of academic learning in the core of the city.
- 1.13 Both elements of the nomination are also situated in the direct setting of the nationally listed Grade II Coventry Central Baths and/or directly bounding the Hill Top Conservation Area, as such when the planning system may be engaged in future in respect of any proposed development, oversight inclusive of conservation specialisms is an established requirement.
- 1.14 The nomination is therefore not recommended to be endorsed, finding, on balance, that the existing neighbouring designations establish due conservation oversight in the planning system, alongside some erosion of quality of the structures and the consideration of the social narrative contribution of the wider campus.

## **2. Options considered and recommended proposal**

- 2.1. The City Council could choose to endorse the nomination for addition to the local list of heritage assets, however further to the assessment of nomination this is not recommended.
- 2.2. The recommendation is to decline the nominations addition to the local list of heritage assets, following assessment and public consultation findings.

## **3. Results of consultation undertaken**

- 3.1. Further to public consultations invited on the nomination during August and September 2022, three responses were received in respect of this nomination, one stating that the site should be utilised for educational use, alongside another, whilst supportive of local listing noting the recent decision against the national listing of the properties.
- 3.2. A subsequent representation post consultation period has also been received from Coventry University expressing concern regarding any constraint the designation may introduce upon future development and operational plans. However, this representation did not contribute toward any additional evidence base on which to inform a recommendation upon the nomination.

#### **4. Timetable for implementing this decision**

4.1. The decision will be implemented immediately.

#### **5. Comments from the Interim Chief Executive (Section 151 Officer) and the Chief Legal Officer**

5.1. Financial implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

5.2. Legal implications

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

#### **6. Other implications**

6.1. **How will this contribute to the Council Plan ([www.coventry.gov.uk/councilplan/](http://www.coventry.gov.uk/councilplan/))**

- Assessment of Local List nominations contributes toward raising the profile of Coventry through promoting Coventry as a visitor destination and centre for the arts and culture, sports and leisure, music and events.

6.2. **How is risk being managed?**

There is no risk associated with the recommendations.

6.3. **What is the impact on the organisation?**

There is no direct impact from the recommendations of the report.

6.4. **Equality/ EIA**

A full Equality and Impact Assessment (EIA) was undertaken as part of developing the Local Plan. As part of that analysis, the Council had due regard to its public sector equality duty under section 149 of the Equality Act (2010).

6.5. **Implications for (or impact on) climate change and the environment**

There is no direct impact from the recommendations of the report.

6.6. **Implications for partner organisations?**

None

**Report author:****Name and job title:**

Chris Styles

Head of Planning Policy and Environment

**Service**

Planning Policy and Environment – Planning &amp; Regulation

**Tel and email contact:**

Tel: 02476 978179

Email: Chris.Styles@coventry.gov.uk

Enquiries should be directed to the above persons.

<b>Contributor/approver name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Service Area</b>	<b>Date doc sent out</b>	<b>Date response received or approved</b>
<b>Contributors:</b>				
Usha Patel	Governance Services Officer	Law and Governance	10.02.2023	13.02.2023
Rob Back	Strategic Lead for Planning	Streetscene and Regulatory Services	10.02.2023	13.02.2023
<b>Names of approvers for submission:</b> (officers and members)				
Finance: Cath Crosby	Lead Accountant, Business Partnering, Place	Finance	10.02.2023	14.02.2023
Legal: Mandeep Bajway	Planning and Highways Lawyer, Legal Services	Law and Governance	10.02.2023	13.02.2023
Director: Andrew Walster	Director of Streetscene and Regulatory Services	-	10.02.2023	13.02.2023
Members: Name		-		
Cllr David Welsh	Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities	-	14.02.2023	14.02.2023

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