

Stourbridge Area Committee – 12th March 2007

Report of the Director of the Urban Environment

Draft Conservation Area Character Appraisals for Four Canal-based Conservation Areas

Purpose of Report

1. To update this Committee upon the results of the public consultation exercise undertaken in respect of the Draft Conservation Area Character Appraisals (including proposed boundary changes and management proposals) for the following four canal-based Conservation Areas:
 - Delph Locks (Brierley Hill);
 - Stourbridge Sixteen Locks (Wordsley);
 - Stourbridge Branch Canal (Amblecote);
 - Stourbridge Branch Canal (Canal Street).

2. To seek the views of Stourbridge Area Committee before the above Conservation Area Character Appraisals are finalised.

To facilitate comments there will be a short presentation at the meeting, exhibition material will be displayed and feedback questionnaires will be provided .

You can also view a full copy of the Character Appraisals, and a questionnaire can be downloaded online on the Councils website by following the link to the Dudley Canals Conservation Area Character Appraisal Public Consultation at:

<http://www.dudley.gov.uk/environment-planning/historic-environment>

Background

3. At the meeting of the Development Control Committee on 15th January 2007 the Director of the Urban Environment was authorised to prepare draft Conservation Area Character Appraisals (including management proposals), for the four canal-based conservation areas listed above. In addition it was also approved that a public consultation exercise would be undertaken directly upon the completion of the draft appraisals. The results of the consultation and the finalised documents are to be reported to Development Control Committee for their consideration and recommendation to the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration for approval.

Purpose and Content of the Draft Conservation Area Character Appraisals

4. The undertaking of Conservation Area Reviews and the formulation of proposals for the enhancement of conservation areas including public consultation is a statutory duty for local authorities.
5. The four canal-based conservation areas (listed above) were designated over 20 years ago (between 1976 and 1987) their review therefore was considered to be highly appropriate especially in light of the fact that the Council's adopted 1999 document entitled - *A Strategy for Dudley's Canals* is also currently under review.
6. The intended purpose of the draft Conservation Area Character Appraisals for the four canal-based Conservation Areas is to:-
 - Define the special significance of the historic canals and their surrounding areas.
 - Propose boundary changes to better reflect historic canal side uses and protect the setting of canals.
 - Put forward proposals for management and enhancement.
7. Character Appraisals in order to carry full weight in planning appeals, need to be subject to effective public consultation (of which this report forms the concluding part).

8. A public consultation exercise was undertaken on the draft appraisals during February and March 2007 with a view that the consultation exercise be drawn to a close with this Committee meeting. In addition to this meeting, the following methods of community engagement have been employed:-

- An exhibition, questionnaires, and a copy of the Conservation Area Character Appraisals were made available in the **Redhouse Cone, Stourbridge Library, Wordsley Library and Brierley Hill Library** throughout the whole of the consultation period: On Saturday 24th February and Saturday 3rd March, between 1:00pm – 4:00pm. the exhibition can also be viewed in the Bonded Warehouse, Canal Street, Stourbridge
- A copy of the Conservation Area Character Appraisal and questionnaires were made available in the **Members Library** and information about the consultation was made available on the **Members Portal**;
- Details of the proposals and a full version of the Draft Conservation Area Character Appraisals were deposited on the **council's website** together with the questionnaire. Users were invited to send their responses and comments electronically direct to the Historic Environment Section of Dudley Council;
- Details of the consultation were published on the Council's **Consultation Database**;
- A large print version of the Character Appraisals for people with sight impairment was made available on request;
- A copy of the draft Character Appraisal and accompanying questionnaires were sent to a selection of **external consultees** inviting comments;
- A presentation and exhibition was made by Dudley Council to elected Ward Members and the general public at **Brierley Hill Area Committee** on 1st February 2007;
- The consultation exercise was also the subject of a **press release** and appeared in several local papers;
- In addition **Council officers manned exhibitions** and made themselves available on Wednesday 7th, Wednesday 14th, Saturday 17th and Monday 26th February 2007 to answer any queries and receive comments locally, at various locations.

9. To assist the public in expressing their views on the draft Conservation Area Character Appraisals a questionnaire was provided in which three specific questions were posed enabling quantitative assessment of the results. Respondents were asked if they 'support', had 'no opinion' or 'oppose' various propositions posed by the Draft Character Appraisal proposals. Space was also provided on the questionnaire for people to make general comments.
10. *A verbal update will be given at this Committee outlining the results of the Public Consultation Exercise to date.*

Finance

11. The preparation of the Conservation Area Character Appraisals and subsequent publication is allowed for within existing work programmes and budgets.

Law

12. Section 69 of the 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 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.*" The act also places a duty on local authorities to designate conservation areas where appropriate and from "*time to time*" to review the extent of conservation area designation within their districts. Section 69 also imposes a duty on local planning authorities "*from time to time, to draw up and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas in their districts and to consult the local community about these proposals*".

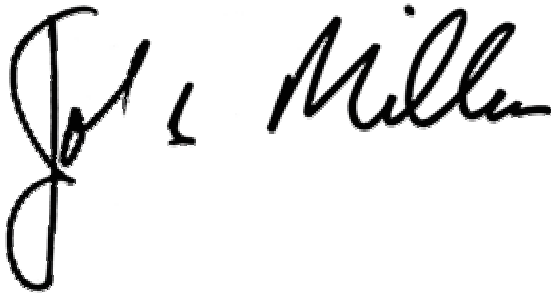
Equality Impact

13. The proposals contained in this report are in full accordance with the Councils equal opportunities policies and should in no way have any impact on different racial groups, disabled people, children and young people, both genders and/or other relevant groups.

Recommendation

14 That the Committee notes the results of the public consultation exercise undertaken to date and supports the process in respect of the draft Conservation Area Character Appraisals (including proposed boundary amendments and management proposals) for the following four canal-based Conservation Areas:

- Delph Locks (Brierley Hill);
- Stourbridge Sixteen Locks (Wordsley);
- Stourbridge Branch Canal (Amblecote);
- Stourbridge Branch Canal (Canal Street).



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John B Millar
Director of the Urban Environment

Contact Officer: Pete Boland – Principal Conservation
Officer/Borough Archaeologist
Telephone: 01384 814190
Email: pete.boland@dudley.gov.uk

Jayne Pilkington – Senior Conservation
Officer
Telephone: 01384 814168
Email: jayne.pilkington@dudley.gov.uk

List of Background Papers

- Dudley MBC, *A Strategy for Dudley's Canals*, July 1999.
- Development Control Committee Report dated 15th January 2007.