

Exhibit H4 to CLAG's conservation officer letter (24 September 2026): the Council's report of 5 November 2002 adopting the Historic Core Conservation Area Appraisal as a development control tool

Filed with CLAG's conservation officer letter, for the public register of application 26/02109/FUL.

The five pages below are the report of the Council's Head of Policy and Projects to its Environment Scrutiny Committee of 5 November 2002 on the Historic Core Conservation Area Appraisal, as CLAG holds it from the Council's published committee papers. The letter quotes from it the sentence that the appraisal would "be used as a development control 'tool' when assessing applications" (exhibit page 3). The pages are reproduced whole; each carries its item number, its page within the item and its page in this exhibit, and is reproduced below the stamp at a slightly reduced size. Nothing on the pages is changed.

Item H4.1: the report to the Environment Scrutiny Committee of 5 November 2002, agenda item 12, "Cambridge Historic Core Conservation Area Appraisal", five pages.

CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

Agenda Item 12

Report by: Head of Policy and Projects

To: Environment Scrutiny Committee on 5/11/2002

Executive Councillor (Environment): Councillor Harrison

Wards: Castle, Market, Newham

CAMBRIDGE HISTORIC CORE APPRAISAL

This report is being submitted to the Scrutiny Committee for prior consideration and comment before decision by the Executive Councillor.

1 DECISION TO BE MADE

- 1.1 To consider the proposed content and format of the Historic Core Appraisal and approve the work as the basis for public consultation.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the recommendations below.

The Executive Councillor is asked to approve the recommendations below.

- 2.1 To approve in principle the content of the draft Historic Core Appraisal as the basis for public consultation.
- 2.2 To approve the strategy for consultation.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on Local Authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of its Conservation Areas. Para. 4.9 of Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (Planning and the Historic Environment) gives some guidance on the form which such a publication should take. It stresses the importance of policies which identify what it is about the area which should be preserved or enhanced, and how that objective will be achieved. Clear assessment of the definition of the area's special interest and the action needed to protect it is seen as the key to a successful document which can enthuse and educate those with an interest in the area.
- 3.2 Although PPG15 is now 8 years old and is expected to be reviewed shortly, it is clear from more recent central government and other guidance that defining 'a sense of place' is felt to remain the key to unlock the potential of areas to survive

and develop. Such documents include *Power of Place* (DCMS / DETR, Dec 2000), *Historic Environment: A Force for Our Future* (DLTR, Dec 2001), *Our Towns and Cities: The Future – Discovering an Urban Renaissance* (DETR, Nov 2000) and *By Design – Urban Design in the Planning System* (DETR/CABE May 2000). Whilst the central area of Cambridge is by no means an area requiring wholesale regeneration, it does need to evolve and adapt but must do this in a way which retains and develops the essential character of the city and adds to rather than destroys its legacy of fine buildings and spaces.

- 3.3 When it was written in Autumn 1971, *Cambridge Townscape* was a document some way ahead of its time. More than thirty years later, however, it is now out-of-date and the pressures and opportunities facing the central area have changed significantly. The Historic Core Appraisal will replace this document and, by necessity, be considerably more detailed.
- 3.4 The Conservation and Design team has been working on a series of Conservation Area Appraisals over the last seven years. A methodology for writing the documents, engaging and empowering those who use the areas and for designating new areas has been developed and has been extremely successful. In parallel, the Team has been instrumental in promoting the 'Conservation Plan' approach for major public and college buildings and this methodology was used successfully to consider the parks within the city.
- 3.5 The Historic Centre of Cambridge is a complex entity. At an early stage it was concluded that any appraisal would need to be more wide-ranging than those which had been produced for smaller, less complex areas of the city. Analyses of studies of other historic cities provided useful background, but such reports tended to take the form of either standard conservation appraisals, capacity studies or studies of the setting of cities. None was felt to be what was required for the Historic Core, though elements might be included within our study. Ultimately, the format of the core appraisal is a hybrid based loosely on the Conservation Plan format. The approach has raised interest from a number of groups including English Heritage and there has been great interest following an article by the Conservation and Design Manager in the *Journal of Architectural Conservation* (Vol.7 No1, March 2001)

4. The Format of the Historic Core Appraisal

- 4.1 The Core Appraisal needs to fulfil a number of functions. It is a document which informs and adds detail to the broader policies within the Local Plan (current and proposed) and must dovetail into other documents such as the Landscape Assessment and the Arboricultural Strategy. Primarily it needs to assess the characteristics of the central area, meet the requirements of PPG 15 regarding the production of management documents and therefore be something which can be used as a development control 'tool' when assessing applications. It is vital that it also has a more positive role. It therefore needs to highlight buildings and areas capable of redevelopment, identify spaces and features requiring enhancement and consider what processes and regimes need to change to improve the quality of the public realm.
- 4.2 A series of meetings with key officers has been held over the past several months to develop the format of the work. This has included officers from Policy and Projects, Development Services, the County's Cambridge Projects Section

together with representatives of English Heritage and the Cambridge Preservation Society. From these meetings a format for the document, based on that advocated by English Heritage for producing conservation plans but with modifications has been developed.

- 4.3 The basis of the Conservation Plan approach, reiterated in the English Heritage guidance *Informed Conservation* (2001), is that a thorough understanding of the site or area must be gained initially to inform future actions. In the case of the Core Appraisal this means an analysis of the historical development of the city and its buildings and considering how Cambridge interacts with its landscape hinterland. It also means briefly considering the key themes which affect the city (e.g. shopping, transport and access, employment, housing, college and university, tourism, open space and leisure). A land-use overview is also included as part of this section.
- 4.4 The significance of the city and its component parts is then considered in a very long section which looks in detail at each street and space. This analyses the importance of the street or space, looks in detail at its buildings and townscape elements, how it is used and the opportunities for improvement. This element is vital in terms of identifying the major opportunities for change and also in helping make decisions on individual planning applications and how they will affect the townscape. A summary of the essential characteristics is then provided.
- 4.5 The next section analyses the current conflicts within the city and attempts to look ahead to consider how future developments and issues might affect the core area. From this it is possible to consider the policies and future strategies which need to be set in place and how they might be implemented.
- 4.6 Initially, because of the length of the document, it was decided that the policies and implementation section should be a separate document produced later. This has now been reconsidered as it is felt vital that action takes place immediately to ensure that the best features of the city continue to be cared for and to give the opportunity for improvement. However, some of the policies and proposals highlight future pieces of work which need to 'spin-off' from this document.
- 4.7 To some extent, the final format of the document has still to be developed. It is considered likely, however, that a high quality general summary will be made widely available which will concentrate on the key features of the city and the opportunities presented. A more detailed technical version, including all the detailed street-by-street work will be available to key councillors and officers to be used as a working document when assessing individual proposals. The means of presenting this – perhaps on CD-Rom - will be investigated.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 Only a small amount of consultation has so far been carried out. Section 4.2 discusses the working party which was established. In addition, individual members of the Conservation and Design Panel and the Cambridge Preservation Society were invited to look in detail at some of the streets and their findings have been incorporated. Clearly however, a significant amount of additional consultation will be needed to give the final document sufficient gravitas, to ensure that it is 'owned' by those with influence over works in the city and to ensure that it can become Supplementary Planning Guidance.

- 5.2 The bulk of the document looks in detail at the streets and space in the city. In a sense this is relatively uncontroversial and it is proposed that consultation on this aspect should be restricted to professionals, councillors, residents groups (where appropriate) English Heritage, the National Amenity Societies and the Preservation Society. It is anticipated that this aspect will be dealt with by sending out copies of the relevant sections and asking for comments and by having face-to-face meetings. Residents groups will be offered the opportunity for exhibition-style meetings and discussion groups.
- 5.3 The key elements of the Core Appraisal however are the policies, opportunities and future actions. Consultation on these aspects needs to attempt to embrace all those with an interest in the city. Workshop sessions, covering individual or groups of issues would appear to be the most sensible way to obtain feedback, and this will be supplemented by work with the media to attempt to advertise the initiative further.
- 5.4 It is proposed that following the consultation, the document be modified and reported back to Environment Scrutiny Committee for consideration before approval as City Council policy by the Executive Member for the Environment. Further work on specific topics, which might spin off from the Core appraisal, will be subject to further consultation as appropriate.

6. OPTIONS

- 6.1 The Council has a duty to formulate proposals for the preservation and enhancement of its Conservation Areas. Although work on the city centre could be delayed, this would render all the detailed work carried out obsolete.
- 6.2 The main choices relate to the format which the work takes and the extent of consultation. A simplistic document could be prepared quickly, may be easy to understand but would lack the weight to influence proposals in a significant way. A highly detailed document may run the risk of being impenetrable for non-professionals. It is therefore proposed that 'twin' documents – a summary and technical version will satisfy both needs.
- 6.3 Failure to carry out sufficient consultation will mean that the document cannot be used as Supplementary Planning Guidance. However the city centre is such a complex subject that unstructured consultation is likely to add huge delay to the publication and make it difficult to separate the issues.

7. REASONS FOR DECISION

- 7.1 To fulfil its statutory duty, the City Council needs to appraise its central conservation area. The decisions will allow this work to proceed should the Scrutiny Committee and Executive be happy with the general approach being adopted.

8. IMPLICATIONS

(a) Financial Implications

Whilst there will be a cost in producing drafts and carrying out consultation, this can be borne from within Policy and Project Team budgets. The cost of printing

the final document is likely to be substantial, though opportunities for sponsorship will be sought from appropriate partners.

(b) **Staffing Implications**

The bulk of the work involves the Conservation Team with officers drawn from other sections for the working group. A similar approach will be taken to subsequent development of the Core Appraisal.

(c) **Equal Opportunities Implications**

Among other things, the Appraisal will consider the needs of all sections of the community and seek to enhance their experience of the city and their ability to move around it.

(d) **Environmental Implications**

This report is concerned with the preservation and enhancement of the environment of the City centre.

(e) **Community Safety Implications**

No direct implications.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following are the background papers that were used in the preparation of this report:

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (Planning and the Historic Environment)

Power of Place, Secretaries of State for Culture Media and Sport and Environment, Transport and the Regions

The Historic Environment: A Force for our Future, Dept. of Transport, Local Government and the Regions

Our Towns and Cities; The Future – Discovering an Urban Renaissance, Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions

By Design – Urban Design in the Planning System; Towards Better Practice, Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions / CABE

By Design – Better Places to Live, Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions / CABE

Journal of Architectural Conservation No.1 Vol.7, March 2001

INSPECTION OF PAPERS

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