

Appendices

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NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Item No.

6

CABINET REPORT

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| Report Title | Proposed Boot & Shoe Conservation Area |
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AGENDA STATUS: **Public**

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| Cabinet Meeting Date: | 16 June 2011 |
| Key Decision: | No |
| Listed on Forward Plan: | Yes |
| Within Policy: | N/A |
| Policy Document: | N/A |
| Directorate: | Planning & Regeneration |
| Accountable Cabinet Member: | Cllr John Yates |
| Ward(s) | Castle and Abington |

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet of the outcome of the public consultation on the proposal to designate a conservation area that recognised and sought to protect the historic legacy of the boot & shoe industry on Northampton's built form. It recommends designation of an extensive conservation area to be known as the 'Boot and Shoe Quarter'.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet note the consultation feedback and approve officer responses to the detailed representations set out in Appendix 3
- 2.2 Cabinet designate a conservation area that covers the area as shown in Appendix 4
- 2.3 The conservation area is named 'The Boot and Shoe Quarter'

- 2.4 That the Director of Planning and Regeneration in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Environment be delegated to approve the finalised Boot and Shoe Quarter Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan

3. Issues and Choices

3.1 Report Background

3.1.1 Importance of Northampton's Boot & Shoe History

3.1.1.1 The Council recognises and appreciates the importance of the boot and shoe industry together with the role played in Northampton's history and development. In 2010 the Council commissioned a specialist consultant to evaluate an area for potential designation as a conservation area. This was for an area to the north and east of the town centre with a particularly high concentration of boot and shoe factories and associated buildings. The designation of a conservation area would formally recognise the history of the shoe industry within Northampton, together with protecting and enhancing the impact of this industry on the built form of the town.

3.1.1.2 The consultant together with officers identified an area incorporating approximately 70% of the surviving boot & shoe buildings in the town to be appropriate to potentially designate as a conservation area. This extensive area was considered to capture the character of the industry, from its origins as a craft industry through to the development of single large factories employing teams of workers.

3.1.2 Consultation on Designation of a Conservation Area

3.1.2.1 Given the extensive coverage of the area, officers considered it appropriate to gauge external reaction to a range of options for potential designation. Cabinet on 24th November 2010 approved the recommendation to consult on three alternative boundaries for a potential conservation area that reflected the importance of the boot and shoe industry. The three boundaries related to designation of:

- a) one large conservation area
- b) a single smaller area
- c) a cluster of 5 smaller areas

3.1.2.1 These were subject to extensive consultation from 13 January - 10 March 2011. The consultation included a letter, a summary leaflet as set out in Appendix 1 and questionnaire posted to every residential and commercial property within the potential conservation area (4279 properties). Properties in adjacent areas to the proposed boundary were given letters (2062 properties) outlining the consultation taking place and how to respond. Statutory consultees, together with amenity societies, letting agents, housing associations, residents associations, conservation area advisory committees and local ward members were also contacted.

3.1.2.2 In addition two drop-in events were held on 20 & 21 January 2011 at Mount Pleasant Baptist Church on the Kettering Road where officers were available to answer questions about the project. These were well attended by members of the public. There was also the opportunity to view and comment on the proposals via the internet. The consultation was also well received and heavily publicised in the local media. A statistical summary of the consultation results is attached at Appendix 2.

3.1.3 Response to Consultation

3.1.3.1 In total 209 responses were received, this represents a 3.24% return on all the letters that were delivered. Given the fact each property in the area had an individual letter and high quality leaflet; this can perhaps be regarded as disappointing as it is below what might be expected when compared to other planning issues related surveys nationally. On the other hand, it probably reflects the fact that most people do not regard the designation of the conservation area as particularly contentious.

3.1.3.2 The response to the consultation showed overwhelming support for the designation of a conservation area (85.6%). The summary in Appendix 2 shows that the majority favoured the single large conservation area. The response to the name of the conservation area was more evenly split between 'Boot & Shoe Quarter' and 'Boot and Shoe Conservation Area', with most in favour of the Quarter. A summary schedule of more detailed representations made and the response that officers consider appropriate is contained in Appendix 3.

3.2 Issues

3.2.1 Extent of Area Designated and name of the conservation area

3.2.1.1 It is important that a designated conservation area adequately reflects the principal characteristics of the boot & shoe industry and its influence on the development of this area of the town. The principal characteristics include the:

- a) development of the industry from a home based workshop industry to mass production,
- b) regimented street pattern,
- c) close association of industrial and domestic buildings, and
- d) subtle architectural embellishments.

3.2.1.2 They were identified more fully in the document 'Background Evaluation of Northampton's Boot & Shoe Heritage' which was informed by the research of the consultant. A reference copy of this document has been placed in the Members' Room. It also sets out the extent of the area that the consultant and officers considered to reasonably exhibit the characteristics that merited potential designation as a conservation area. The document was also available for comment as part of the consultation: in addition, the characteristics were also set out in the summary leaflet that was used for consultation purposes (Appendix 1). The whole area recommended for potential designation in the background document was included as Option 1

'one large conservation area' in the summary leaflet. The extent of this area can be seen Appendix 4.

3.2.1.3 The consultation clearly showed (as can be seen in Appendix 2) that Option 1 was preferred by the majority of respondents. Whilst this is important as the good will of property owners / occupiers increases the longer term chances of the implementation of a successful designation, the main issue in selecting the boundary of a conservation area is the technical merits of doing so. The designation has to be 'fit for purpose' in being able to enhance or protect the character of the area included. Officers consider that the advantages of the larger area (Option 1) namely that it:

- a) includes approximately 70% of the surviving boot and shoe buildings, including the oldest surviving buildings,
- b) covers an area which fully demonstrates the development of the industry from its home based craft origins through to large-scale mechanised production,
- c) clearly demonstrates the regimented street pattern layout,
- d) clearly demonstrates the relationship between industrial and domestic buildings outweigh the potential disadvantages that it has of covering:
- e) an area of 63.72 hectares, therefore capturing buildings which are not associated with the industry, and
- f) any buildings, both industrial and domestic, which have already experienced significant change

3.2.1.4 The other two options consulted upon did not have the same level of advantages that would have the ability to enhance or protect the historic character of the boot and shoe influence on this part of the town that Option 1 would have. On this basis officers consider that Option 1 is the best choice for designation. In line with the consultation responses, it is recommended that the 'Boot and Shoe Quarter' should be the name of the designated conservation area.

3.2.2 Appraisal and Management Plan

3.2.2.1 In designating the conservation area it is important that the Council produces an associated Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan. This has been done for the conservation areas that have been reviewed over the last 5 years and is consistent with best-practice advice. The appraisal and management plan highlights the key features within the conservation area that need to be enhanced or protected and how improvements to the Conservation Area will be delivered. This will enable those proposing change or conservation within the area to properly understand how they can preserve or enhance the character of the area.

3.2.2.2 The 'Background Evaluation of Northampton's Boot & Shoe Heritage' document that was consulted upon has through slight amendment to recognise the boundary that has been designated and responses to consultation representations set out in Appendix 3, become the appraisal and management plan. A copy of the final version of Northampton's Boot and Shoe Quarter Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan has also been placed in the Members' Room and is available for Cabinet to peruse. This will be made more widely available when the Council

publicises the designation of the conservation area. As this is a sizeable technical document, in the interests of saving resources in reproducing the printed agenda, there is little merit in it being attached to the Cabinet report. It is recommended that Cabinet delegate responsibility for approval of the appraisal and management plan to the Director of Planning and Regeneration in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Planning and Environment.

3.3 Choices (Options)

3.3.1 There are a number of choices available to Cabinet. It could decide to:

- a) not designate the 'Boot and Shoe Quarter' conservation area
- b) designate the 'Boot and Shoe Quarter' conservation area to cover the boundary shown in Appendix 4
- c) designate the 'Boot and Shoe Quarter' conservation area, and if there are material technical reasons for doing so, to cover an alternative boundary to that shown in Appendix 4

3.3.2 Option (a) Not designating the 'Boot and Shoe Quarter' conservation area

3.3.2.1 Given the recognition of unique value of the historical importance of the boot and shoe industry on the development of the urban form of Northampton and in particular the area identified in Appendix 4 there is substantial merit in designating a conservation area. As well as the planning/historic arguments for doing so, there is widespread support for conservation area designation. It is therefore considered that option (a) is not appropriate.

3.3.3 Option (b) Designate the 'Boot and Shoe Quarter' conservation area to cover the boundary shown in Appendix 4

3.3.3.1 This report sets out the rationale for choosing option (b). Paragraph 3.2.1.3 sets out the technical reasons for the preferred boundary and is the choice that is recommended for Cabinet approval.

3.3.4 Option (c) designate the 'Boot and Shoe Quarter' conservation area to cover an alternative boundary to that shown in Appendix 4

3.3.4.1 If Cabinet is persuaded that there are sound technical reasons that would stand up to external scrutiny, e.g. at a planning inquiry, why the designation of a conservation area with a boundary different from Appendix 4 is appropriate, then Option (c) would be acceptable. However, officers currently think that on the basis of representations and the evidence made available to date that option (b) is the most appropriate.

4. Implications (including financial implications)

4.1 Policy

4.1.1 Conservation Areas were first introduced in 1967 in the Civic Amenities Act. They were later defined as 'areas of special architectural or historic interest,

the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance' in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The Act places a duty on the Council to consider designating conservation areas.

- 4.1.2 Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment (2010) sets out government planning policy on conservation areas. They are defined as 'designated heritage assets' and there is an emphasis on enhancing or better revealing the significance of conservation areas. English Heritage has also published best practice guidance on the designation and subsequent management of conservation areas.

4.2 Resources and Risk

- 4.2.1 The Council has been under some pressure from heritage groups and English Heritage to assess the potential for a boot & shoe conservation area. It may face criticism and risk reputational damage if the significance of the industry is not adequately protected through the designation of a conservation area of suitable extent.
- 4.2.2 Designation will have some implications for property owners who could react negatively because some national permitted development rights will be removed. However, representations highlight much support for designation, so this is considered a low risk.
- 4.2.3 Following designation the Council will have a duty to undertake a minimum level of formal notification in the press (London Gazette and one local newspaper). Each respondent to the consultation will be notified of the outcome of Cabinet's decision. Printing of the appraisal and management plan will be limited, with the main emphasis on making the document available electronically both via the internet and on CD-ROM.
- 4.2.4 The Council will have to deal with additional planning applications resulting from the removal of permitted development rights, conservation area consents and enforcement issues related to the designation. At this stage, it is difficult to gauge what the implications are in terms of demands on the resource of the Planning Division. This is something that will be kept under review. Nevertheless, it should be borne in mind that the national good practice target of reviews of conservation area appraisals and management plans being no more than 5 years old is currently an unrealistic proposition within Northampton given the limited resource currently available to the Built and Natural Environment Team. The Planning Division's service plan targets for 2012-14 reflect this.

4.3 Legal

- 4.3.1 Legal Services will ensure the necessary formal notifications are placed in appropriate press.

4.4 Equality

- 4.4.1 An Equality Impact Screening Assessment consistent with the new duties placed under the Equalities Act 2010 has been completed. This did not

identify any adverse impact on those with protected characteristics would occur through the designation of a conservation area. Nevertheless the ethnic diversity of the local community was recognised and addressed through making people aware the consultation material was available in other languages if required.

4.5 Consultees (Internal and External)

4.5.1 Section 3.1.2 sets out the consultation process. In addition to this a number of internal departments were consulted. Copies of the consultation documents were provided on request. Copies of the summary leaflet were available in large print, Braille and in other languages on request.

4.6 How the Proposals deliver Priority Outcomes

4.6.1 Designation of a Conservation Area will assist in delivery of Priority Three of the Corporate Plan: A confident, ambitious and successful Northampton, by recognising the historic significance of the Boot and Shoe industry and the influence it had on the importance and development of the town.

4.7 Other Implications

4.7.1 None relating to this report.

5. Background Papers

5.1 Cabinet 16th November 2010 Boot and Shoe Quarter: Potential Designation of a Conservation Area

5.2 Background Evaluation of Northampton's Boot & Shoe Heritage January 2011
<http://www.northampton.gov.uk/downloads/B-S-evaluation-draft.pdf>

5.3 Northampton Boot and Shoe Quarter Appraisal and Management Plan – Working Draft May 2011

5.4 File – 348/22

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