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ENGLISH HERITAGE

NORTH WEST REGION

STRATEGIC PLANNING
AND DEVELOPMENTS

14 MAR 2014

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Action by	
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Copied to	

Mathew Wansborough

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Our ref: 1297,1296,1295
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10th March 2014

Dear Mathew,

Re: Conservation Area Appraisals Consultation- Old Market Place, George Street, Stamford New Road & the Draft Altrincham Strategy.

Thank you for consulting English Heritage (EH) on the above Conservation Area Appraisals and the draft Altrincham Strategy in E-mails dated 3rd Feb and 17th Feb 2014. English Heritage has already confirmed that we have no comment on your appraisals for Goose Green and The Down's. Whilst English Heritage is not a statutory consultee for conservation area appraisals we are commenting on The Old Market Place, George Street and Stamford New Road because they are co-joined and each area appears on the Heritage at Risk register for England.

Can I firstly thank Elisabeth Read for providing me with a tour of Altrincham on the 24th March; this helped me to better understand the context and rationale for proposing extensions. We commend Trafford Council for undertaking Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans in response to the statutory duties in sections 69 and 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended); we trust the following observations and comment will prove helpful.

English Heritage Advice

It is clear that Trafford Council's original reasons for designation have changed over time. In 1973 the Market Place Conservation Area boundary was drawn very tightly around a historic core of pre 1835 buildings, the original boundary did however



include almost all of this areas listed buildings. A series of extensions have followed. The proposed boundary now includes residences around the Mount through to Groby Place and most of Regent Road to the South. I am not entirely convinced that your proposed boundary holds together as a distinct place with a coherent character or appearance, nor that its description as the Old Market Place is particularly helpful; your revised boundary contains a number of character areas within it. Extensions to the Stamford Street and George Street conservation areas are more compelling because here you focus on lines of street architecture each having a good sense of enclosure and history which helps to define their special interest as streets, albeit George Street must remain marginal as a designation in its own right because of the level of change that has occurred and the poor quality of many of its buildings.

If your proposed extensions are taken forward most of the town centre would be covered by conservation area designation, it might then be appropriate to consider the benefits of a single designation for "Altrincham Town Centre" containing overlapping character areas? A number of planning authorities have moved from multiple designations to a single designation in recent years, a notable example being Lancaster which now has a single conservation area covering its entire city centre.

A single designation can help by way of future management, place-making and marketing. In your case the Altrincham Strategy presents the town as a single place containing a series of functional quarters but these differ from the 3 proposed CA boundaries which could add to any confusion. Single town or city centre designations are generally more understood by the public. It is interesting to contemplate if Altrincham town centre as a whole would still be considered to be a conservation area "at risk"?

I have little to comment on the Altrincham Strategy other than to say that it could be strengthened if you were to set out the tasks and actions necessary to enable you to deliver your objectives on Page 6. The report could also usefully say more about the potential for conservation led regeneration and area based repair and enhancement. During my walkabout I mentioned to Elisabeth that Northwich in Cheshire had recently secured a Townscape Heritage Initiative to help address necessary fabric repairs and to support its independent retail sector.

<http://www.hlf.org.uk/news/Pages/NorthwichTownscapeHeritage.aspx>

Other towns have successfully combined HLF funding with Business Improvement District or S106 programmes. I would be happy to meet with your regeneration colleagues to discuss heritage led regeneration opportunities if you think this would be helpful. In the meantime, the content of the following documents is worth considering.

"The Changing Face of the High Street: Decline and Revival- A review of retail and town centre issues in historic areas, June 2013"

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/changing-face-high-street-decline-revival/>

"Heritage Works- The use of Historic Buildings in Regeneration" British Property Federation, EH, RICS and Deloitte Real Estate."

http://www.bpf.org.uk/en/newsroom/press_release/PR120207_Heritage_Works.php

“Constructive Conservation- Sustainable Growth for Historic Places”
<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/advice/conservation-principles/constructive-conservation/constructive-conservation-sustainable-growth/>

And

“Vacant Historic Buildings:An owner’s guide to temporary uses, maintenance and mothballing”

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/vacanthistoricbuildings/>

I hope the following advice proves helpful to you moving forward. If you would like me to clarify any of the points raised in this letter please call.

In the meantime please note that I will be on leave from the 10th March till the 17th March and from the 25th March till the 31st March.

Yours sincerely

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