

REPORT OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Meeting Held on 3rd October, 2003

Membership:

Councillors: Councillor T.W. Hunt (Chairman), Councillor J.B. Williams (Vice-Chairman), BF Ashton, MR Cunningham, Mrs CJ Davis, PJ Dauncey, DJ Fleet, JGS Guthrie, JW Hope, B Hunt, Mrs JA Hyde, Brig P Jones CBE, Mrs RF Lincoln, RM Manning, RI Matthews, Mrs JE Pemberton, R Preece, Mrs SJ Robertson, DC Taylor, WJ Walling

THE ENGLISH HERITAGE REGISTER OF BUILDINGS AT RISK 2003

1. English Heritage published its sixth annual edition of a national register of buildings at risk in July 2003. The document provides information on Grade I and Grade II listed buildings and scheduled ancient monuments considered by them to be at risk through neglect or decay. The list does not imply criticism of the owners of the buildings and monuments concerned but is aimed at defining the scale of the problem and establishing which important buildings and artefacts are at risk. The information is also helpful to establish the level of resources necessary to bring the identified structures back into good repair.
2. There are approximately 5800 historic buildings within the County (including 60 Grade I and 300 Grade II listed buildings) and just over 260 scheduled ancient monuments. 33 of the listed buildings and the ancient monuments have been identified as being at risk. This compares with 26 identified in 1999. 5 have been deleted from the 1999 register and 12 new ones have been added, 5 of which are churchyard crosses which have been added because of the serious condition of their stonework and the fact that English Heritage hopes to promote a grants scheme for them.
3. The Council has very limited resources to assist with the repair of the buildings at risk, many of which are substantial structures such as castle ruins or church ruins. English Heritage is however prepared to invest in the establishment of specialist conservation posts in local authorities to help tackle buildings at risk. This is to help with the management of the historic buildings stock and give support to undertake statutory action. It was therefore decided that the Regional Office of English Heritage should be approached to discuss what assistance it might give to the Council to monitor the condition of its historic buildings and increase its actions towards safeguarding the County's listed buildings and scheduled ancient monuments.

DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT'S (DCMS) CONSULTATION PAPER – PROTECTING OUR HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT: MAKING THE SYSTEM WORK BETTER

4. A consultation paper was published by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in July, inviting comments by 1 October. The document is part of the review of heritage protection that was started in November 2002 and carried out in association with English Heritage.
5. The Review covers the designation of Ancient Monuments, Listed Buildings, Registered Parks and Gardens, Registered Battlefields, World Heritage Sites and Conservation Areas, together with how the planning system protects these historic assets. Four objectives are identified as the basis for the proposals put forward in the review document:

- to simplify what are seen as complex protection systems (Simplifying);
 - to increase the openness of processes which are considered inaccessible, even secretive (Openness);
 - to have a more flexible regime for management (Flexibility); and
 - to have a system robust enough to conserve the best and to continue to take on board changes in what people value without devaluing the purpose (Rigour).
6. The outcome of the review will have significant implications for the work of the Planning Committee and the officers and the DCMS propose a number of events to be held during the autumn to debate the issues although no details of these have yet been received.
7. The Planning Committee has advised the Cabinet Member (Environment) that it generally supports the intentions for improvement set out in the consultation document, namely to establish a system that is simpler, more open, flexible and rigorous than the present arrangement. However it does have concern about many of the more detailed suggestions and it has set out these concerns in answer to the questions that have been posed by the review document, for consideration by the Cabinet Member (Environment)

PROPOSED CHANGES TO NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY GUIDANCE 3 – HOUSING (PPG3)

8. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has sought the views of local authorities and interested parties on proposed changes to National Planning Policy Guidance 3 – Housing (PPG3) in respect of
- the reallocation of employment and other land to housing and
 - influencing the size, type and affordability of housing.

The Committee considered the main issues regarding the proposed changes to PPG3 and received a summary of concerns which had been prepared by the officers. The Committee was of the view that there are elements of the changes being proposed to national policy which would present the Council with difficulties in implementation. The Committee therefore agreed that the observations which had been prepared by the Head of Planning Services should be submitted to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister to highlight the concerns of the Council to the proposed changes to PPG3.

**T.W. HUNT
CHAIRMAN
PLANNING COMMITTEE**

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Agenda for the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 3rd October, 2003.