

REPORT OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Meeting Held on 1st October, 2004

Membership:

Councillors: T.W. Hunt (Chairman), 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

PLANNING APPLICATION REFERRED TO THE PLANNING COMMITTEE - DCSE2004/2399/F - APPLICATION FOR THE RETENTION OF NEWLY FORMED ACCESS, LAND AT WELSH NEWTON, ROSS-ON-WYE, HERFORDSHIRE

1. The Head of Planning Services has referred the planning application to the Committee under the provisions of the Constitution because the Southern Area Planning Sub-Committee was mindful to refuse it contrary to the officers' recommendations and Council policy. The reason for refusal was that the Sub-Committee felt that the access was unsafe.
Having considered details of the planning application and the report of the Head of Planning Services, the Committee felt that there were insufficient grounds for the application to be refused and it was approved as recommended.

TREES AND DEVELOPMENT - SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE

2. The Committee has considered suggested draft Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) for trees on development sites together with proposals for its publication for consultation purposes. The aim of the SPG is to help to promote the need to retain important trees at the site planning stage within the planning process and the steps needed to protect them during construction work and after development has taken place. The Committee has recommended to the Cabinet Member (Environment) that the draft Supplementary Guidance for Trees and Development should be approved for consultation purposes.

REVIEW OF HERITAGE PROTECTION, THE WAY FORWARD - DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE MEDIA & SPORT

3. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has undertaken a review of the system for protecting the historic environment. At its meeting in October 2003 the Committee was generally in support of the Government's intentions to improve the system of historic environment designations set out in the review consultation document entitled "Protecting our Historic Environment: Making the System Work Better". However, it expressed some concerns, primarily in relation to the financial and staff implications of what was proposed.
4. In June 2004, DCMS published the outcome of its consultation in a document entitled 'Review of Heritage Protection – the Way Forward'. Its conclusion is that: 'A system is needed which is more simple and transparent to the general public and other key stakeholders but which maintains at least the same level of protection for historic assets.' The document also sets out the decisions it has taken following the review.

The proposals put forward include measures that DCMS considers:

- bring greater clarity for people owning, living in, using and managing historic properties about the significance of those assets; and
 - develop new ways of managing complex sites and partnerships with those who own and manage historic sites.
5. Some of these reforms could begin quickly and some would need primary legislation and gradual introduction over a period of years. For the latter, a White Paper is expected to be published next year with a view to being approved in 2007. The Committee is still concerned about the resource and skills implications, especially in relation to the longer-term proposals. In the short term, these will predominantly affect English Heritage. Until more detail is available about the longer-term proposals, the implications for local authorities remains uncertain. It was decided that the changes put forward in the DCMS document should be noted and that a further report should be brought to the Committee when the White Paper anticipated on this matter emerges in 2005.

REVIEW OF CONSERVATION AREAS WITHIN HEREFORDSHIRE

6. The Committee has considered a proposed programme for the review of Conservation Areas within the County during 2005 and 2006. Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 required local planning authorities to determine Conservation Areas and that the task should be undertaken "from time to time". The review period is not actually specified although there is a suggestion in Government guidance that it should be in association with the review of Local Plans or Unitary Development Plans. The Committee has recommended to the Cabinet Member (Environment) that the programme should be undertaken as follows:
- (a) the Conservation Area appraisal statement for Colwall be reviewed and subsequently used as a template for appraisals of other areas;
 - (b) a programme for undertaking conservation area reviews and appraisals for 2005 and 2006 should comprise:

2005 - Almeley, Dilwyn, Ross and Kington

2006 - Bosbury, Much Marcle, Leominster Town Centre and Central Hereford; and
 - (c) the programme beyond this be set in the light of the experience gained over the first two years.

REPAIR OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS WITHIN HEREFORDSHIRE

7. A report was presented to the Committee about the take-up of grant assistance for the repair and preservation of historic buildings in the current financial year. The Cabinet Member (Environment) had agreed that the budget could be used more flexibly to tackle a number of pressing building issues. The budget in 2003/4 of £25,500 has been supplemented by a further £3,619 which was grant money that has been offered and either not claimed or recovered following the sale of property. The grants had resulted in repairs valued in excess of £170,000 being carried out and the work had been undertaken by local Herefordshire craftsmen with a number of materials being sourced locally. This work was important in helping to retain the local distinctiveness of the built heritage within the County, enhancing in turn both the local economy and tourism. The budget for 2004/5 is £26,140 and again some recycling of the funds available is likely so that a total of £36,140 is anticipated. Of this some £4,320 has been reserved for contribution towards a project involving

buildings at St Katherine's, Ledbury and £3,500 towards Urgent Works at The Summerhouse, Homme House, Much Marcle. The Committee was delighted to learn that such a small but significant budget has had such an impact to help preserve the County's heritage of ancient and listed buildings.

8. Details of the English Heritage Buildings at risk list have also been considered and work is due to commence soon on the Saxon wall to the rear of St Owens Court which would prevent the historic monument from being overgrown in the future. The Committee feel that this site is not well known within the County and has asked the Conservation Manager to investigate whether a signpost could be erected to indicate its location to the public.

HEREFORDSHIRE ARCHEOLOGY STRATEGY 2004 - 2007

9. A proposed Archaeological Strategy for Herefordshire for the period 2004 – 2007 has been together with an accompanying Strategic Plan. The proposals have been developed and have been helped by the experience gained following the implementation of the 2001-2005 Archaeological Strategy. That Strategy had assisted with a significant increase in archaeological activity over the past three years and generated a high level of interest in advice and information; supporting educational, tourism and regeneration activity. The work of the Archaeology Team in relation to the aims set out in the Strategy had attracted a significant amount of external funding for a range of projects and also matching additional indirect financial and other benefits accruing. The Committee has agreed that it is appropriate to consider rolling the Strategy and Strategic Plan forward to cover the period 2004 – 2007 and has recommended item to the Cabinet Member (Environment).

PLANNING AND COMPULSORY PURCHASE ACT 2004

10. A new system of development planning is being introduced by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, part of which involves the necessity for the Council to produce a Local Development Scheme. The main implications of the new arrangements for the Council are:
 - existing Structure and Local Plans to continue in operation under the transitional arrangements until replaced by the adopted UDP
 - existing strong links between the Herefordshire Plan, the community strategy, and planning policy documents to be continued
 - the UDP to be completed on the 'old style' regulations, whereby the Inspector's report is not binding
 - the UDP to continue in operation for at least three years after adoption, with an extension to this transitional period for selected policies subject to Government Office agreement
 - planning documents to be subject to new requirements under European Directive for Strategic Environmental Assessment – will affect the UDP if not adopted by 21 July 2006
 - a requirement to indicate how Supplementary Planning Guidance will be dealt with in the transitional period
 - Post the UDP Inquiry in 2005, work to begin on documents forming part of the new system
 - an immediate requirement to prepare a Local Development Scheme, showing how the new system will operate in Herefordshire in the coming three years
 - the first Annual Monitoring Report to be submitted to Government by December 2005
11. One of the requirements of the Act was is the preparation and publication of a statement of how the forward planning work would be organised over a three-year period. The statements or Local Development Schemes (LDS) had to be in place

within six months of commencement of the Act. An LDS for Herefordshire has been prepared and informal consultation has taken place with the Government Office and the Planning Inspectorate about it. The Committee has some concerns about the proposals and reservations that regional planning would impinge upon local planning and make the system more remote from the people who were directly affected by it. The Committee has noted that the reforms have been designed by Government to provide a more flexible and inclusive set of policies aimed at greater community involvement and linking with the provision of other community services. The Committee endorsed the Local Development Scheme and recommended that the Cabinet Member (Environment) considers submitting it to Cabinet for approval.

PARISH PLANS

- 12 The Committee considered the Bishopstone and District Group Parish Plan, and the Weobley Parish Plan which have been prepared as interim Supplementary Planning Guidance to the emerging Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan. The Committee recommended to the Cabinet Member (Environment) that the planning elements of the Parish Plans be adopted as interim Supplementary Planning Guidance and expressed its appreciation for the hard work undertaken by the local community in helping to prepare the documents.

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

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Agenda for the meetings of the Planning Committee held on 1 October 2004.