

Conservation Areas



Technical, Economic and Environmental Services Scrutiny Panel

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1. Introduction by the Chair

I am very pleased to present this report of a review undertaken by the Technical, Economic and Environmental Services Scrutiny Panel on Conservation Areas in Tameside.

Conservation Areas are generally successful at preserving and enhancing historic built environments and in increasing pride within the local community. Tameside currently has nine conservation areas. The Scrutiny Panel was disappointed to learn that this is below average for an area with Tameside's history, when compared with other areas in Greater Manchester. Four of Tameside's conservation areas are currently on the English Heritage 'At Risk' Register.



Preserving conservation areas is not just the responsibility of Planning Services but requires the involvement of the whole council, members of the public, local businesses and national bodies like English Heritage. Training on the effects of development control on the borough's conservation areas and heritage should be a compulsory requirement for all members of the Council's Speakers Panel.

The adoption of a Local List of historic buildings, structures and features of architectural, historic, archaeological or artistic interest can strengthen protection of locally important buildings or areas which do not enjoy statutory protection. A Local List can be used as a material consideration in deciding the outcome of planning decisions and therefore enhances the council's ability to protect sites of historical significance. This review identified the need for a local list in Tameside to supplement the conservation areas and listed buildings we currently have.

The effective engagement and involvement of the local organisations such as the Local History Forum can be an excellent resource in terms of skills and local knowledge, in the development of a Local List. We believe that local groups in Tameside can make a real contribution to helping preserve the borough's heritage and character.

On behalf of the Technical, Economic and Environmental Services Scrutiny Panel I would like to thank all those who have participated in this review.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alan Whitehead'.

Councillor Alan Whitehead
Chair of Technical, Economic and Environmental Services Scrutiny Panel

2. Summary

The character of Tameside's towns and villages was generally established during their rapid growth in the late 18th and 19th Centuries. Each town and village has unique characteristics which derive from topography, social and economic development and available resources. Their interest lies in their development over time and the interrelationship of all these factors.

The designation of conservation areas enables local authorities to preserve or enhance areas of special architectural or historical interest.

Conservation area designation may not be enough to protect the historic built environment, as change does occur over time. One single factor is rarely sufficient to put a conservation area at risk, but the accumulation of small changes can begin to erode the character and appearance of historic buildings and areas. Tameside currently has nine conservation areas, four of which are on the English Heritage 'At Risk' Register.

The Panel found that a significant factor in the success of conservation areas is the degree and quality of guidance and advice given and how this is acted upon, controlled and enforced as part of the development plan and development control process.

The adoption of a Local Lists of historic buildings and structures can strengthen the protection of locally important buildings which do not enjoy statutory protection. When accompanied by relevant planning policies, the Local List would become a material consideration in deciding the outcome of planning decisions relating to locally listed buildings.

Tameside Council does not yet have an adopted Local List of historic buildings and structures, although nominations for such a list are being compiled with the assistance of the Local History Forum.

The Panel recognises that the preservation of conservation areas in the borough requires the involvement of the whole council as well as members of the public, local businesses and other stakeholders.

3. Membership of the Scrutiny Panel

2010/11

Councillor Alan Whitehead (Chair), Councillor Clive Patrick (Deputy Chair)

Councillors Dorothy Cartwright, Margaret Downs, Paul Dowthwaite, Ann Holland, Janet Cooper, George Roberts and Sean Parker-Perry and Mr Tony Moss (Citizen Panel)

4. Terms of Reference

Aim of the Review:

To examine the strengths and weaknesses of conservation areas, and to consider their effectiveness in Tameside and make recommendations for improvement where possible.

Objectives:

1. To consider the legislation and policies on conservation areas.
2. To examine the council's approach in determining the designation and maintenance of conservation areas.
3. To consider the practical implications of conservation areas and to examine their effects on residents, businesses and the whole borough.
4. To seek any good practice available in the public or private sector in respect of the designation and maintenance of conservation areas.

Value for Money/Use of Resources:

Conservation areas are designed to preserve the special architectural or historic interest of an area. There are financial implications in designating such areas, not only on the council but also on the residents. These will be addressed during the scrutiny review, together with the consideration of best use of resources.

Equalities Issues:

The review will consider any equalities issues that arise. During the course of the review no issues around equality were found.

Local Area Agreement Targets:

The Local Area Agreements are seen as the drivers for improvement, and the environment of the borough is a key factor within the set of targets.

5. Methodology

The Scrutiny Panel met with the council's Conservation Officers and Senior Management and toured conservation sites in Tameside.

The Scrutiny Panel met with representatives of the Tameside Local History Forum.

The Scrutiny Panel met with the County Archaeologist, Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit.

The Panel met with a representative from English Heritage.

The Panel met with the Tourism and Marketing Officer, Tameside MBC.

This report has been checked for factual accuracy by the Council's Conservation Officer.

6. Rationale to the Review

- 6.1 The concept of conservation areas was introduced in the Civic Amenities Act 1967. Rather than specific buildings, conservation areas protect the quality and special interest of a neighbourhood or area as a whole.
- 6.2 Section 69 of the Civic Amenities Act gave local councils the power to designate as conservation areas “areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”. Factors such as the layout of roads, paths and boundaries, and surrounding gardens, parks and street furniture all contribute to the overall scene of a conservation area.
- 6.3 Further legislation evolved in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which stated that “special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area”.
- 6.4 Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment 2010 sets out detailed policy relating to the role of the historic environment in local plan making, how applications for development affecting heritage assets should be determined and how information on the state and significance of the historic environment should be collected and disseminated.
- 6.5 Local Authorities have a number of duties affecting conservation areas, which include:
- To produce a development plan for the area which sets the framework for the future changes (the Local Development Framework or LDF)
 - To determine applications for planning permission and Conservation Area Consent
 - To designate conservation areas and to formulate proposals for their preservation and enhancement
 - To take enforcement action when planning controls are disregarded
- 6.6 Tameside’s adopted Unitary Development Plan (UDP) provides the current framework for development and conservation within Tameside, setting out the main policies by which planning applications in the Borough will be determined. Part 2, Section 7 of the UDP outlines the Council’s policies in relation to “Conservation and Enhancement of the Built Environment”. The UDP will eventually be replaced by the LDF which is currently in production.
- 6.7 The Scrutiny Panel included a Review of Conservation Areas in its Work Programme for 2010/11 in order to seek clarification on planning requirements and practice.

7. Review Findings

- 7.1 Conservation areas vary widely in type, size and character. It is often the combination of history, architecture, layout, open spaces, trees, street furniture and the quality of the public realm that make an area worthy of designation. The decision to designate is made locally, in accordance with best practice guidance from English Heritage.

7.2 Conservation Areas in Tameside

7.2.1 In Tameside, there are nine designated conservation areas:-

- **Ashton Town Centre**

Ashton town centre is a good example of a Georgian planned town superimposed on a medieval street layout. Although there are many good quality historic buildings which add to the character and appearance of the conservation area, there are a number which are vacant and in poor condition (e.g. western end of Stamford Street central).

- **Carrbrook**

Carrbrook is a good example of a planned late Victorian industrial village with scattered pre-industrial settlements which have been incorporated into the village over time. Of interest are the remains of industrial water features associated with the former print works and the triangular shaped bowling green around which the industrial village appears to have been laid. The village also lies beneath the remains of a much older medieval castle which dominates the landscape and views from the village.

- **Copley**

The growth of Copley illustrates the social and economic history of the 19th Century, with the founding of the mill in the 1830s being closely followed by the development of housing, St. Paul's Church and school.

- **Fairfield**

Fairfield is unique in having two adjoining planned villages, the 18th Century Moravian Settlement and the early 20th Century Broadway 'Garden Village'.

- **Millbrook**

Millbrook is a planned Victorian industrial village. Of special interest are the early development of terraced cottages (c. pre1850) with their internal courtyards to the west of Huddersfield Road. Such 19th century developments document a close-knit and self contained industrial community, all of which gave Millbrook its historic character and architectural interest.

- **Mottram-in-Longdendale**

Alongside Ashton town centre, Mottram is one of Tameside's oldest recorded settlements. Today the village is characterised by stone houses dating from the 17th century nestled below the Medieval Church of St. Michael's and All Angels.

Mottram is an area of significant historical and architectural interest. The area contains a wealth of historic buildings which reflect the distinct periods in the development of the village from its origins as a medieval hilltop settlement through its growth in the 17th Century in association with agriculture, trans-pennine trade and early industrialisation, and periods of planned growth in the 18th and early 19th Centuries. Many buildings and much of the historical pattern of the village survive intact, telling the story of a traditional hillside village and its transition through time.

- **Portland Basin**

Portland Basin is an important example of the borough's industrial canal side heritage. The inter-relationship of the two canals, river and railway is the most interesting and distinctive characteristic of the conservation area.

- **St. Anne's, Haughton Green**

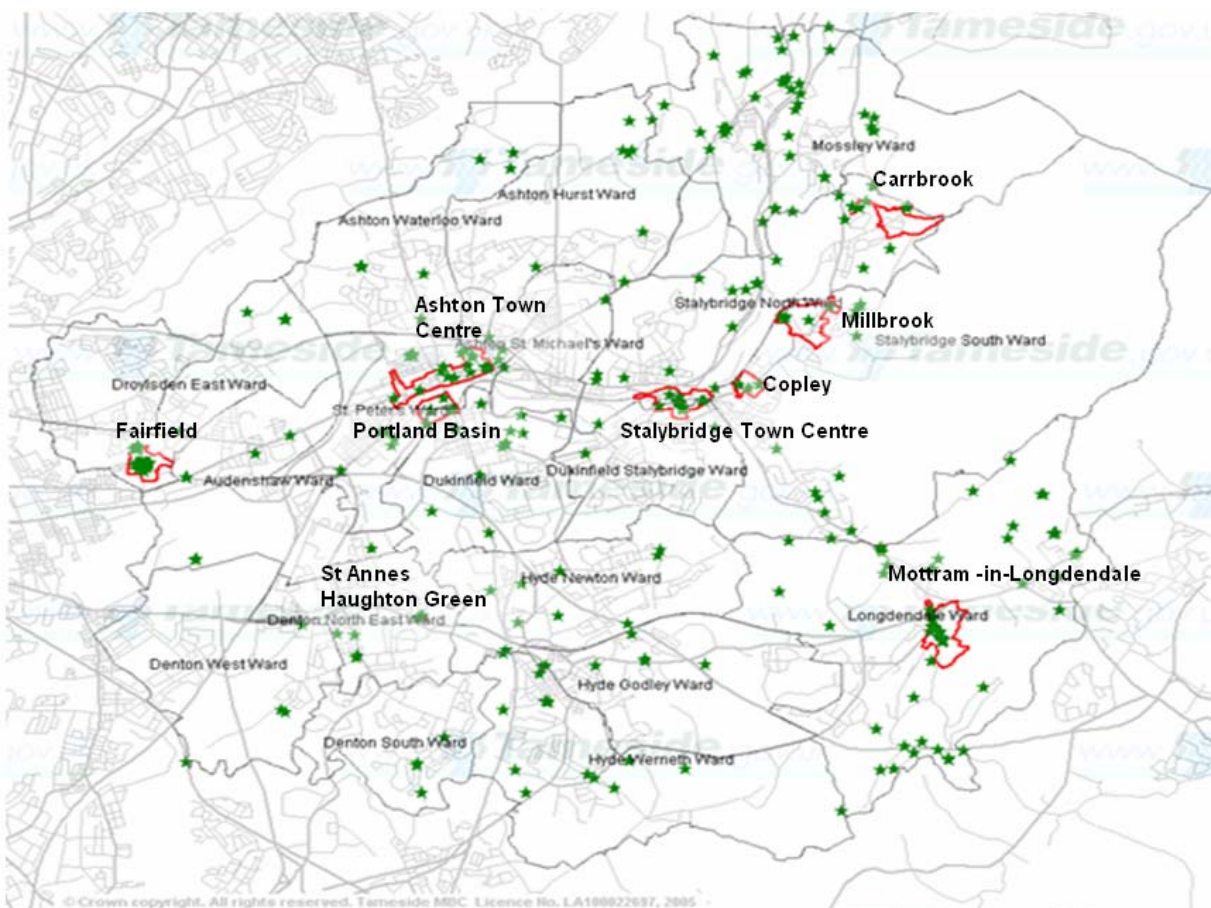
St. Anne's Church, together with the Rectory, perimeter walls, Lychgate and grounds, constitutes an exceptionally fine example of Victorian church architecture.

- **Stalybridge Town Centre**

Stalybridge town centre is an attractive Pennine town with a strong historic character linked to the development of transport routes and mill buildings.

7.2.2 The map below geographically identifies Tameside's nine conservation areas and current statutory listed buildings:

Conservation Areas _____ Listed Buildings *



7.2.3 In order to produce a sound designation, an appraisal on the character, appearance and historic significance of the area should be undertaken and an accompanying series of management proposals drafted. Internal and external consultation is desirable in order to receive support for the proposals and to obtain the full benefit of the designation's purpose, i.e. to preserve and enhance the

character and appearance of the conservation area. The Scrutiny Panel heard that the main resource in this process is officer time.

7.2.4 The criteria for designating conservation areas is determined by planning legislation and policies and best practice from English Heritage. The process for designation includes:

- (i) Writing an appraisal with accompanying management proposals (about 8 weeks depending on the size and complexity of the area). The appraisal usually includes site survey and analysis; photographic recording; historical research (historic maps, literature, archive images); assessment of the condition of the area; consideration of the existing boundary and whether it should be altered; identification of particular threats to architectural or historic significance and identification of sites which offer potential for future development and enhancement of the area. The findings are then written up, Management proposals are drafted in response to the findings of the appraisal.
- (ii) Internal consultation process (about 9 weeks) with relevant officers, Executive Members and Heritage Champion and relevant ward members. Following this, an Executive Decision will be taken to approve public consultation on the draft documents.
- (iii) Public consultation takes place in line with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement. A newspaper advertisement is published and letters are sent to residents and businesses within each area and other stakeholders inviting representations on the proposals. Officers attend the relevant District Assembly meeting to present the proposals formally, and the documents are made available for inspection in libraries and Customer Service Centres, at drop-in consultation sessions within each conservation area, and on the Council's website. The draft documents are amended, taking into account comments received.
- (iv) A Key Decision will then be taken to adopt the Appraisal and Management Proposals and confirm the boundary of the conservation area. The Secretary of State and English Heritage would be informed, and advertisement of the proposed designation published in the London Gazette and one local newspaper.

7.2.5 Conservation area status does not mean that development or redevelopment can not occur. However, the Council must be mindful of its duty to 'preserve or enhance' the character and appearance of these areas when determining such applications. The Council encourages sensitive redevelopment of appropriate sites within conservation areas. It is important that buildings are brought back into use in order to ensure their survival and to contribute to local vitality and "sense of place". For example, the former St. James' School on Huddersfield Road, Millbrook was vacant and in a derelict state for a number of years. An application in 2006 to demolish the former school was dismissed at Appeal by the Planning Inspectorate who made reference to the special character of the former school and the positive contribution it made to both Huddersfield Road and the conservation area. A subsequent scheme for the creation of a 2-storey, 45 bedroom care home secured approval and is now under construction. The scheme included the retention of the historic front section with new-build to the rear.

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- 7.2.6 Conservation Area designation brings with it greater control over demolition of buildings and structures. Demolition or substantial demolition of a building within a conservation area will require Conservation Area Consent from the Council. Where the building in question makes a positive contribution to the area, demolition is unlikely to be acceptable without robust justification. For example, the owners of a prominent building within Ashton town centre conservation area wanted to demolish the building and redevelop the area to form a car park. The Council won an appeal against this proposal which would have resulted in the loss of a prominent and significant building. There was insufficient justification for demolition and no acceptable proposals for the reuse of the site. The proposal was thus contrary to policies C3 and C4 of Tameside's Unitary Development Plan.
- 7.2.7 Apart from the need to apply for Conservation Area Consent in cases involving demolition, there is no extra burden on householders arising from a conservation area designation unless their permitted development rights are formally withdrawn. This can be done by means of an Article 4 Direction, which will require the householder to apply for planning permission for changes such as replacement windows and doors, the construction of extensions, changes to roofs, the application of external render or paint etc. There is no charge for applications required as a result of an Article 4 Direction. PPS5 recommends that local authorities consider the use of an Article 4 Direction where the exercise of permitted development rights undermines their aims for the historic environment. Tameside has an Article 4 Direction in place in Mottram and on an individual property in the Copley conservation area. Additional Article 4 Directions are being proposed as part of the current programme of reviews. The Council may be required to pay compensation in circumstances where an applicant cannot obtain planning permission for development which otherwise would be treated as permitted development. Although the Panel were not aware of any instances where compensation has been paid.
- 7.2.8 Notice has to be given to the Council if anyone proposes to cut down or lop any tree in a conservation area, whether or not it is covered by an individual Tree Preservation Order, as it is recognised that trees are a major contributor to the character and appearance of historic areas.
- 7.2.9 The role of the Conservation Officer is to provide conservation advice to owners, developers, architects, council officers and elected members. This includes advice on the repair and maintenance of historic buildings and to undertake conservation area appraisals, which set out the state and significance of the borough's historic environment and proposals for management and enhancement.

7.3 Organisations Involved in Conservation

- 7.3.1 English Heritage (officially known as the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England) is the Government's statutory advisor on the historic environment. English Heritage has responsibilities in registering and protecting the historic environment and giving advice on the management of change involving designated Heritage Assets.

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- 7.3.2 The Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit (GMAU), on behalf of the ten Greater Manchester Authorities, holds and maintains a Historic Environment Record (HER) Geographical Information System linked database comprising of 17,000 records of sites of archaeological significance in Greater Manchester. The Historic Environment Record is used by GMAU staff in monitoring planning applications to identify threats to known archaeological/historical sites and to provide advice at an early stage to developer consultants on potential archaeological issues.
- 7.3.3 The Panel heard that the GMAU has been involved in the planning appeal process relating to the prominent building in Ashton town centre conservation area (referred to in paragraph 7.2.6. The GMAU is currently undertaking a four year Historic Landscape Project, funded by English Heritage and Association of Greater Manchester Authorities. Tameside's element of the project is due for completion by May 2011.
- 7.3.4 The Tameside Local History Forum has been established for ten years and was formed to ensure that Tameside's local history is recorded correctly and shared. Membership consists of thirty individuals representing Countryside and Theatre; Museums and Galleries; Local Studies, Civic Societies and Heritage Centres. The Forum has established links with English Heritage and the Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit.

7.4 Listed Buildings/Local Lists

- 7.4.1 A listed building is a building that has been placed on the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest. Listing gives a building legal protection from demolition and alterations which would destroy historic features or affect its character.
- 7.4.2 The Statutory List of Buildings is compiled by English Heritage and all properties are judged in accordance with a set of national standards:-
- All buildings built before 1700 which survive in anything like their original condition
 - Most buildings of 1700 to 1840 although selection is necessary
 - Between 1840 and 1914 only buildings of definite quality and character and the selection is designed to include the major works of principal architects.
 - Between 1914 and 1939, selected buildings of high quality or historic interest
 - A few outstanding buildings erected after 1939.
- 7.4.3 In choosing buildings, particular attention is paid to:-
- Special value within certain types, either for architectural or planning reasons or as illustrating social and economic history (e.g. industrial buildings, railway stations, schools, hospitals, theatres, town halls, markets, exchanges, almshouses, prisons, lock-ups, mills).
 - Technological innovation or virtuosity (e.g. cast-iron, prefabrication, or the early use of concrete.
 - Association with well-known characters or events

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- Group value, especially as examples of town planning (e.g. squares, terraces or model villages).

7.4.4 The buildings are classified into Grades to show their relative importance. These are as follows:

Grade I - Buildings of exceptional interest (around 2% of all listed buildings)

Grade II* - Particularly important, of more than special interest (around 4%)

Grade II - Buildings of special interest, which warrant every effort being made to preserve them.

7.4.5 Many local authorities have a Local List containing buildings, structures or features which, whilst not statutorily listed, the planning authority feels to be an important part of an area's heritage due to their architectural, historic, archaeological or artistic interest. Although Locally Listed features fall short of the criteria for statutory listing, they can often be major contributors to townscape or local identity.

7.4.6 Policy Planning Statement 5 (PPS5) highlights the contribution of Local Listing to the development of the evidence base used to support local plan making and that encouraging the use of Local Lists strengthens the role of local heritage assets as a material consideration in deciding the outcome of planning decisions.

7.4.7 The Panel heard that Tameside does not currently maintain a Local List. However, the Tameside Local History Forum has provided the Council with a partial list but due to the resources required to develop and publish the list this work has yet to be taken forward.

7.4.8 Out of the ten Greater Manchester Authorities, five authorities maintain a Local List. A good example of a well maintained Local List was that maintained by Stockport Council. At the time of the review there were 368 entries on the List, with a potential for 1000 entries. Entries on Stockport's Local List were also mapped on a GIS mapping system. The Panel heard that this enabled council officers and members to be aware of local heritage assets, especially in deciding the outcome of planning decisions.

Conclusions

1. Conservation areas are generally successful at preserving and enhancing historic built environments and in increasing pride within the local community. However, this depends on the successful management of changes within these areas.
2. Tameside has nine conservation areas which the Panel heard was below average compared to other areas in Greater Manchester. The Panel was concerned after hearing from English Heritage that an area with Tameside's history could have more conservation areas.
3. The use of an Article 4 Direction is a useful tool in restricting the permitted development rights of householders within conservation areas, which can result in erosion of character if left uncontrolled.

4. A significant factor in the success of conservation areas is the degree and quality of guidance and advice given and how this is acted upon, controlled and enforced as part of the development plan and development control process.
5. The Local History Forum could play a far stronger role in the development of a local list of buildings or areas of local architectural or historic interest.
6. The development of a local list would enhance the council's ability to protect sites of historical significance. This was also highlighted by all officers/organisations that participated in the review.

Recommendations

1. That consideration be given to a Supplementary Planning Document being drafted detailing the council's commitment to preserve the special nature of conservation areas and the borough's heritage when considering applications for development in those areas and consider developing new areas as resources allow.
2. That training on the effects of development control on the borough's conservation areas and heritage be a compulsory requirement for all Members of the Speakers Panel and that this be provided on an annual basis early in the Municipal Year.
3. That the Tameside Local History Forum be engaged by the council in the development of a local list as a priority, to enable use of their skills and local knowledge.
4. That the council undertakes the necessary procedures required to introduce a local list of buildings or areas of special importance in the borough.
5. That the council is not reticent in adopting enforcement procedures where conservation area requirements are blatantly ignored.

7.5 Heritage At Risk

7.5.1 For more than ten years English Heritage has produced an "At Risk" Register which records the health of England's historic environment and shows where action is needed. Buildings at Risk have been assessed since 1999. Conservation Areas were included on the Register for the first time in 2009.

7.5.2 There are currently six categories of heritage at risk:

- Buildings at Risk
- Monuments at Risk
- Parks and Gardens at Risk
- Battlefields at Risk
- Conservation Areas at Risk
- Places of Worship at Risk

7.5.3 In 2009, the Heritage At Risk register focused on the new category of conservation areas. Research for the register identified a number of common issues nationally. The top 10 issues facing conservation areas were :

- Unsympathetic replacement doors and windows – 83%
- Poorly maintained roads and pavements – 60%
- The amount of street clutter – 45%
- Loss of boundary walls, fences and hedges – 43%
- Unseen satellite dishes – 38%
- The effects of traffic calming or management – 36%
- Alterations to the front elevations, roofs and chimneys – 34%
- Unsympathetic new extensions – 31%
- The impact of advertisements – 23%
- Neglected green spaces – 18%

7.5.4 The top issues discovered in the North West region were:-

- Unsympathetic replacement doors and windows
- Vacant or neglected buildings at risk
- Intrusive recent development
- High traffic levels
- Vacant or abandoned development sites
- Poorly maintained roads and footpaths
- Intrusive car parking
- Loss of boundary walls, fences and hedges

7.5.5 Inclusion on the English Heritage 'At Risk' Register is determined by a survey undertaken by the local Planning Authority. The survey considers condition, vulnerability, trend (significant improvement to significant deteriorate) and local Planning Authority judgment. Agreement for inclusion on the register is with English Heritage Area Advisors within the Regional Team following moderation.

7.5.6 Tameside currently has five buildings and four conservation areas on the 'At Risk' Register:-

- Old Ashton Baths (incorrectly known as Hugh Mason House) Henry Square, Ashton-under-Lyne
- Hyde Hall, Town Lane, Denton
- Old Hall Chapel, Old Hall Street, Dukinfield
- Apethorn Farmhouse, Apethorn Lane, Hyde
- Staley Hall, Millbrook, Stalybridge

i. Ashton town centre conservation area is currently at risk due to economic decline as the economy shifted from the core of the town. Gap sites; loss of historical details, poor shop fronts and the condition of prominent buildings such as Old Ashton Baths all contribute to the risk status.

ii. Millbrook conservation area is currently at risk due to the loss of historic detail such as replacement windows and doors; satellite dishes; roofs and the dereliction of some key buildings. The Panel heard that, dependent on

some of the work currently being undertaken on key buildings, this conservation area may come off the register this year.

- iii. In Portland Basin conservation area, although some key buildings are well maintained there has been a lot of redevelopment which has had an impact on the historic character, fabric and detail. However, the Scrutiny Panel heard that the boundary of the conservation area could be re-drawn as part of the current review, with a more tight definition of the area reducing the risk status and ensuring its removal from the Register.
- iv. In Stalybridge town centre, the widespread use of UPVC windows and doors; insensitive alterations, including shop fronts (inappropriate design and materials); economic decline/vacancies; street clutter and poor public realm have all contributed to the conservation area being on the 'At Risk' Register. The English Heritage 'At Risk' Register identifies the trend for Stalybridge town centre was expected to deteriorate significantly.

7.5.7 The Scrutiny Panel was made aware that due to recent nationally imposed budget cuts, the council's buildings preservation fund would no longer be available.

Conclusion

- 7. Preserving conservation areas in the borough requires the involvement of the whole council, such as highways, environment and planning together with members of the public, shopkeepers and local businesses and also national bodies like English Heritage.

Recommendations

- 6. That the Planning Department must work with other council services and Partners to raise awareness of conservation issues.
- 7. That English Heritage explore ways and submit recommendations in supporting utility companies in preserving conservation areas.
- 8. That the Council makes every effort to remove Tameside's conservation areas from the English Heritage 'At Risk' Register.

7.6 Public Engagement

7.6.1 Public engagement is important in the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas. Properties located within conservation areas are recorded as a Local Land Charge, although the Panel heard that it was not necessarily the case that residents are aware that they live in a designated conservation area.

7.6.2 The Panel heard that in Stockport, each conservation area is identified by signage and information leaflets are available for each area. Stockport Council also has

good engagement of local residents and groups in educating other residents, including those new to the area.

- 7.6.3 As part of the current review of the borough's conservation areas, members of the public have been invited to make comments on the draft conservation area appraisals and management proposals documents at relevant District Assembly meetings and at informal drop-in sessions within each of the conservation areas.

Conclusion

8. The effective wider engagement and involvement of the public in conservation areas can be an excellent resource which has been used in other authorities and underused in Tameside.

Recommendations

9. That where resources permit and wherever possible, the council involve the public as widely as possible to enhance the ability of the council to effectively preserve conservation areas.
10. That appropriate signage is used when and wherever possible to inform residents and visitors that they are entering or living in a conservation area.

7.7 Grant Funding

- 7.7.1 Grant schemes for enhancement of conservation areas are operated by English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund, and must be applied for separately. The process is competitive as demand is greater than availability.
- 7.7.2 Bids submitted have to be very robust, and only clearly defined projects are likely to stand any chance of success. The Local Authority is always expected to provide match funding. The Panel heard that the process of a bid can be costly in itself, as individual elements of the project must be identified e.g. target buildings, public realm works, and support generated amongst residents, business and other stakeholders.
- 7.7.3 The most recent example of a grant scheme within a conservation area in Tameside is the 2005 Ashton Old Town Townscape Heritage Initiative which received £2,756,865 of grant funding.
- 7.7.4 In addition, over the past five years Tameside has received a total of £882,000 in repair grants for places of worship from English Heritage. No grant funding has been received in Tameside for historic buildings, monuments and designed landscapes.
- 7.7.5 During the Review the Panel found that tourism boosts economic benefits and enriches the culture of an area.

Conclusion

9. Grant funding is essential to effectively supplement council resources in preserving conservation areas.

Recommendations

10. That all opportunities to access grant funding needs to be explored by both Cultural Services and the Planning Department.
11. That tourist attractive elements in Tameside are more vigorously pursued as resources allow.

7.8 Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

- 7.8.1 The Scrutiny Review culminated in the Panel undertaking a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis of conservation areas based on discussions with all involved in the Review including national research with estate agents.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Socio-economic benefits/Economic prosperity• Cultural – local pride• Educational aspects• Public Interest• Unique Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understanding – training for members of Speakers Panel to ensure fully informed decisions• Investment – fabric and officer time• Loss of buildings preservation fund– directed at buildings at risk• Inappropriate development with limited use of Article 4 Direction
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tourism• Use of local knowledge – Support and involvement from local voluntary groups (Local History Forum)• Early involvement can prevent detrimental change	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Buildings at risk• Deterioration of properties• Public understanding

- 7.8.2 The SWOT analysis supported the findings of the Review and highlighted that the strengths of conservation areas could be better maximised in order to improve opportunities for increasing tourism in the borough, which in turn would bring economic and cultural benefits.
- 7.8.3 Low investment in conservation areas and preserving the borough's wider historical heritage will see further deterioration in Tameside's heritage assets.

8. Conclusions

1. Conservation areas are generally successful at preserving and enhancing historic built environments and in increasing pride within the local community. However, this depends on the successful management of changes within these areas.
2. Tameside has nine conservation areas which the Panel heard was below average compared to other areas in Greater Manchester. The Panel was concerned after hearing from English Heritage that an area with Tameside's history could have more conservation areas.
3. The use of an Article 4 Direction is a useful tool in restricting the permitted development rights of householders within conservation areas, which can result in erosion of character if left uncontrolled.
4. A significant factor in the success of conservation areas is the degree and quality of guidance and advice given and how this is acted upon, controlled and enforced as part of the development plan and development control process.
5. The Local History Forum could play a far stronger role in the development of a local list of buildings or areas of local architectural or historic interest.
6. The development of a local list would enhance the council's ability to protect sites of historical significance. This was also highlighted by all officers/organisations that participated in the review.
7. Preserving conservation areas in the borough requires the involvement of the whole Council, such as highways, environment and planning together with members of the public, shopkeepers and local businesses and also national bodies like English Heritage.
8. The effective wider engagement and involvement of the public in conservation areas can be an excellent resource which has been used in other authorities and underused in Tameside.
9. Grant funding is essential to effectively supplement council resources in preserving conservation areas

9. Recommendations

1. That consideration be given to a Supplementary Planning Document being drafted detailing the council's commitment to preserve the special nature of conservation areas and the borough's heritage when considering applications for development in those areas and consider developing new areas as resources allow.

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2. That training on the effects of development control on the borough's conservation areas and heritage be a compulsory requirement for all members of the Speakers Panel and that this be provided on an annual basis early in the Municipal Year.
 3. That the Tameside Local History Forum be engaged by the council in the development of a Local List as a priority, to enable use of their skills and local knowledge.
 4. That the council undertakes the necessary procedures required to introduce a Local List of buildings or areas of special importance in the borough.
 5. That the council is not reticent in adopting enforcement procedures where conservation area requirements are blatantly ignored.
 6. That the Planning Authority must work with other council services and Partners to raise awareness of conservation issues.
 7. That English Heritage explore ways and submit recommendations in supporting utility companies in preserving conservation areas.
 8. That the Council makes every effort to remove Tameside's conservation areas from the English Heritage 'At Risk' Register.
 9. That where resources permit and wherever possible, the council involve the public as wide as possible to enhance the ability of the council to effectively preserve conservation areas.
 10. That appropriate signage is used when and wherever possible to inform residents and visitors that they are entering or living in a conservation area.
 11. That all opportunities to access grant needs to be explored by both Cultural Services and the Planning Authority.
 12. That tourist attractive elements in Tameside are more vigorously pursued as resources allow.

10. Borough Treasurer's Comments

Grant funding is essential to effectively supplement council resources in preserving conservation areas. It is recommended that all opportunities to access grant funding needs to be explored by both Cultural Services and the Planning Department, ensuring that we maximise all external funding opportunities available to us. Funding for the council resources is to be met from existing revenue budgets and is mainly for Officer's time.

11. Borough Solicitor's Comments

Obviously it's important to understand the architectural and historic character of historic assets and that will always be an important aspect of the work of conservation officers and others working in the historic environment sector. It is good to remind ourselves what the actual legal protections are which conservation areas enjoy. This report is intended to do just that. Conservation areas were introduced in the Civic Amenities Act 1967 postdating listing by 20 years and scheduling by almost a century. But as at 2005 there were 9,876 conservation areas in England and Wales. No-one knows how many buildings that represents but it is probably in excess of a million. If that is the case then there are around double the number of buildings protected by conservation area designation as there are by listing and scheduling combined, making conservation areas, from a numerical standpoint at least, a very significant form of heritage protection. In that context, it is important that those charged with caring for the historic built environment understand what legal protections exist for conservation areas. This reports sets out an overview of the most significant of those protections and how best they should be used to protect the environment both for those who live and work in it and for the economic benefit of all.