

## **Section 3.0. The Conservation Area Management Plan**

This section underpins work already undertaken in developing the Tavistock Conservation Area Appraisal and the Tavistock Conservation Area Management Plan. These documents were prepared in 2009 and have recently been revised for formal adoption by West Devon Borough Council. The documents provide:

- A basis for the proactive management of the Conservation Area through planning policy, development management and enforcement
- Fulfilment of the Council's statutory duty in regard to section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990
- A demonstration of how the Council will have full regard for the historic environment in relation to the National Planning Policy Framework
- An action plan, initially for the 5 years of the THI, to make heritage issues self-sustaining
- A clear illustration of the Council's commitment to funding partners for the future implementation of the THI.

Through public consultation and adoption by the Council the management plan will inform future plan making and the determination of relevant planning applications.

### **3.1 The area**

#### Heritage Value

Designated in 1969, the Tavistock Conservation Area included the town centre, historic streets radiating from it and two areas of Bedford Cottages at Fitzford and Westbridge. In 2009, following extensive surveys and consultation, the designation was expanded. In part, the revisions reflected the inclusion of Tavistock within the more generous World Heritage Site boundary.

Tavistock developed around the Benedictine Abbey of St Mary and St Rumon, founded in AD 974 on the banks of the River Tavy. This site now lies beneath the modern town centre, although a few buildings or structures remain. In 1305 Tavistock became one of four Devon stannary towns, responsible for the assay and marketing of tin. This, with the income from wool and cloth production, made Tavistock one of the wealthiest abbeys in the West Country.

After the Dissolution in the 1530s, Tavistock developed under the patronage of successive Dukes of Bedford. Copper mining from the 1800s onwards produced huge revenues for the Bedford Estate to provide new roads and prestigious new buildings. These included a church, several schools, a Corn Market, a Town Hall, a Pannier Market, a Police Station and a Guildhall. These were centred on Bedford Square and Abbey Place, close to the old parish church of St Eustachius. Former abbey buildings were converted for mainly civic uses. Distinctive model cottages were also built by the Bedford Estate to house local mine workers.

Today, Tavistock retains a townscape of great interest due to the spacious streets, attractive town centre squares, and prestigious 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings, many of which were built out of the local grey-green Hurdwick stone. The standing abbey remains make a key contribution to the townscape

and the layout of the present-day town centre has been strongly influenced by the plan form of the former abbey. Away from the centre, the medieval streets such as West Street, Market Street and Bannawell Street are also significant.

Further details of the conservation area's special architectural and historic interest, are provided in the Conservation Area Character Appraisal at Appendix 7 including a record of all the properties which make a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area and are therefore regarded as heritage assets.

### Problems & Threats

The Conservation Area Appraisal identified a series of issues affecting the character of the area. The principal issues are set out in Section 7 under the headings of:

- Strategic issues, such as the World Heritage Site, traffic management and car parking
- Organisational issues, such as human resources and development management
- Policy and control issues, such as designation, Local Plan policy and heritage-at-risk
- Economic issues, such as maintaining vitality, external funding and the use of upper floors
- Spatial issues, such as the protection of views and enhancement of the public realm
- Site specific issues, such as the Guildhall, Betsy Grimbal's Tower and Bank Square.

A major problem for Tavistock is that of stepping up to its role as the gateway to the Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site with very limited resources. The underlying economic factors that threaten the well-being of the town were set out in some detail by SERIO Research & Innovation in their 'Case for Intervention', a paper that was included in the Stage 1 submission. The main statistics and conclusions are considered in Section 2 above.

### Aims & Objectives

The aims of the Tavistock THI scheme are as follows:-

- Uplift the general environment and setting of the Conservation Area and World Heritage Site.
- Address the urgent needs of key buildings at risk at the commercial heart of the town.
- Bring vacant and underutilised buildings back into beneficial use.
- Help to address the weaknesses of the local economy by increasing business turnover, improving income and skill levels, thus safeguarding and creating jobs, both directly through the building and repair works and by boosting business performance.
- Improve knowledge and public understanding of the historic environment through education, learning and training events and programmes.
- Increase the commitment of both local people and key partners to the enhancement and preservation of the town's historic environment.

This will be achieved by:

1. Offering grant assistance to support the repair, architectural reinstatement and reuse of historic buildings
2. Increasing the awareness and understanding by the local community of the value and role of the historic environment in the regeneration of the town

3. Working with key stakeholders through the Tavistock Townscape Heritage Partnership to encourage complementary initiatives for both physical enhancement and the positive promotion of the town as an attractive place to work in, live in and visit.

More specifically the objectives of the scheme are to:

- Secure the repair and reuse of identified critical projects within the lifetime of the scheme
- Significantly reduce the number of other historic buildings within the town centre in disrepair or underuse by addressing target buildings in the first instance
- Promote the authentic reinstatement of lost architectural detail of target and other properties in order to secure the local distinctiveness, quality and interest of the town
- Further engage the local community in promoting a sense of civic pride and awareness of the value of the historic environment
- Promote principles of conservation repair and proper maintenance to arrest further problems of buildings at risk in the future.

### The Way Forward

The THI presents a unique opportunity to co-ordinate public sector funding in a manner which has full regard to the proper care and treatment of the historic environment. Without this, statutory powers alone could only secure short term solutions for arresting further deterioration as the current poor state of the local economy provides little or no financial incentive. Co-ordinated public sector funding through the THI can move beyond arresting deterioration to securing sustainable improvements to both the local economy and the appearance of the town's historic environment, as an integral part of its wider regeneration.

The strategy for achieving this is to embed conservation principles not only in the work of the THI but also in the programmes of other funding agencies, in the actions of owners and occupiers, and indeed in the proper planning management of the conservation area.

The eligibility of critical and target properties has been based on:

- Condition and degree of risk
- Architectural and historic significance
- Ability to meet programme outcomes
- Potential for enhancement or the reinstatement of architectural detail.

They have then been prioritised according to the criteria outlined in section 2.4 above.

### **3.2 Planning policies**

Planning policies relevant to heritage issues and the THI area were identified in the Stage 1 submission. These policies from the West Devon Borough Local Plan Review (2005) remain current.

In 2011, the Core Strategy was adopted and this included an over-arching policy for the historic environment as follows:

Strategic Policy 18 – The Heritage and Historical Character of West Devon

- a. Historic features and areas of historic importance, and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings will be protected and where appropriate enhanced. This will include:
  - Listed Buildings
  - Conservation Areas
  - Historic Parks and Gardens
  - Other features with local or national designation, such as sites with archaeological importance.
  
- b. Development proposals within the World Heritage Site will conserve and where possible enhance the Outstanding Universal Value of the site. In particular, regard should be given to the following:
  - The historical and social importance of key buildings and their contextual setting
  - The need to retain locally distinctive features in the design of buildings and the sub-division of the landscape
  - The integrity of industrial infrastructure
  - The importance of and evidence for ancillary industries.
  
- c. The Borough Council will designate and keep under review Conservation Areas in order to protect or enhance their special architectural or historic interest and will seek to protect the character and setting of listed buildings.

Meanwhile, work has commenced on a new Local Plan that will supersede the 2005 plan. The intention is that these documents when formally adopted will continue to inform Planning Policies and Proposals.

It is vital that public investments made through regeneration initiatives, such as the THI, are not undermined by subsequent actions. The local authority is, therefore, committed to making full use of its planning policies with increasing sophistication to support and protect public investments. A statement of that commitment is provided at Appendix 8.

### **3.3 Planning measures**

The Borough Council is well aware of the provisions in the Planning Acts for sanctions that can be applied where necessary:

- Amenity Notices – S215 T&CP Act 1990
- Urgent Works Notices (Listed buildings) – S54 PLBCA Act 1990
- Urgent Works Notices (Unlisted buildings) – S76 PLBCA Act 1990
- Repairs Notices – S48 PLBCA Act 1990
- Compulsory Purchase Orders – S47 PLBCA Act 1990
- Planning Enforcement Notices – S172 T&CP Act 1990
- Listed Building Enforcement Notices – S9 PLBCA Act 1990

The Council can also demonstrate its propensity to make use of these powers and to make effective use of the threat of such action<sup>1</sup>. However, these sanctions are seen as a matter of last resort and, at present, remedies to site-specific issues are being addressed through negotiation.

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<sup>1</sup> Research by the Institute of Historic Building Conservation confirms that a high proportion of cases are successfully resolved without the sanction having to run its full course.

The Council has considered the introduction of an Article 4 direction for the Tavistock Conservation Area. Whereas this would benefit the outer areas where there are buildings in use as single dwellings, it should be noted that, in the commercial core of the town centre and particularly the THI area, the scope for an Article 4 direction is limited. This is because there are few permitted development rights for these properties. Hence, controls already exist and the introduction of an Article 4 direction would have little effect.

### **3.4 A framework for design standards**

An important outcome of the THI is to establish standards and provide exemplars. The aim is that a public demonstration of expectations for the treatment of historic buildings will encourage other owners and reduce the need for force.

Awareness and understanding of repair and maintenance issues in the wider community will be improved through:

- Publication of targeted guidance
- Promoting heritage open days
- Raising standards of craft skills training
- Involvement in events, such as 'Gutterclear' promoted by Maintain Our Heritage and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB)
- Giving wide publicity to the SPAB / IHBC publication '*A Stitch in Time*', which is currently being revised.

Further details of such activities are given in Section 4 below. The Borough Council has already published '*Conservation Areas: Guidance for owners, agents and contractors*' and this will be followed with further practical advice.

The Conservation Area Management Plan proposes a Public Realm Strategy to promote high standards in the design of new development. Where major proposals are put forward, the Borough Council will use design review techniques, in association with the RIBA, to bring external advice to development decision-making.

The Borough Council has employed consultants to develop a Public Realm Strategy in consultation with the Highway Authority and other key stakeholders. This also focuses on specific projects that could be delivered through the THI, but it underpins these with a series of principles for traffic management, materials, street furniture and signage.

### **3.5 Education and training**

The proposed complementary initiatives for education and training will run in parallel with the building repair element of the Tavistock THI. The aim is that they will:

- Increase the educational potential of the town
- Raise popular awareness of heritage values
- Improve the quality of the traditional construction skill-base
- Give added value to investments in the repair and productive use of historic buildings

These initiatives, which are detailed in the Action Plan below, will integrate with the current and planned heritage activities promoted by a number of community groups in the town.

The Heritage statistics collected by English Heritage outlined in Heritage Counts for the South West Region identify several areas where there are skills shortages and provide a clear focus for investment in Training which might be supported by this THI. The National Heritage Training Group (NHTG) completed its first skills needs analysis of the built heritage sector in 2005 which indicated that over half the traditional building crafts practitioners in the South West were struggling to recruit due to lack of applicants and lack of skills. More recent research carried out for English Heritage and the NHTG shows that this situation has got worse with the economic downturn. As a result, carpenters, slate and tile roofers and stonemasons are in short supply. The few traditional construction craft businesses which remain are not taking on apprentices and trainees and the training providers report a drop in demand, putting courses at risk of closure.

In 2013 research commissioned for Heritage Counts revealed that in the South West :

- there are significant skills gaps in key professions which include architectural historians, conservation engineers and landscape architects.
- there is a need for training for volunteers in the heritage sector.
- recruitment to professional services roles (town planners, conservation officers and chartered surveyors with a conservation specialism) has slowed dramatically to 25% of employers - compared to 41% nationally
- 75% of archaeology businesses experienced difficulty in recruiting suitable staff

The initiatives outlined in the Stage 1 Bid have been explored and several have been developed following the themes identified by the Emmie Kell Consulting report on the World Heritage Site Key Centre Learning Strategy. These are:

- The story of Tavistock Abbey – what remains and what it represents.
- The Russells and their management of Tavistock as a landed estate.
- The medieval Town of Tavistock. Its plan and its components.
- The planning of the improvement of Tavistock Bedford Square and Plymouth Road.
- The architects of Tavistock – Theophilus Jones, Edward Rundle, John Foulston, George Whitwick, Henry Clutton, Southcombe Parker.
- Markets and market clusters – Pannier Market, meat market, livestock market.

Contact with SERIO through Lorna Bell, with Fiona Horrell Head of Partnerships at City College Plymouth and with Phil le Grice of Duchy College and Kirsten Puddephatt at Saltash College has identified several training courses which could be run during the THI project. However, it is desirable to increase awareness of heritage issues by demonstrating the specialist craft skills involved during repair work on target buildings, particularly the Critical Projects in this THI. It is therefore proposed to hold at least one heritage skills open day during the contract for the repair of the Butcher's Hall. The day would be written into the Contract so that all firms tendering for the work would have to make allowance for the cost of creating a safe environment for the access by

members of the general public to learn from what was being done at the time. The response to this will inform any future events of this nature.

The following activities will be promoted and supported by the THI during the Project:

- Heritage Open Days – The first of these was held in Tavistock in September 2012 and the Guildhall and Abbey Chapel porch were opened to the public. It is proposed that the buildings included in the THI will be opened to the public at future Open Days during the project.
- The Architects of Tavistock – A workshop day on the architects commissioned by the Dukes of Bedford to design buildings in Tavistock will be held during the second year of the THI.
- Tavistock Abbey Conference – A weekend event held in the Town Hall with invited speakers presenting the current state of knowledge about the Abbey; its physical remains, archaeological research and documentary sources as well as the Abbey's involvement in the town's development and plan and management of the surrounding landscape through its granges.
- Production of material for a travelling exhibition about Tavistock's heritage – To develop a lasting legacy which will broaden knowledge of Tavistock's heritage within the local community and generate wider interest amongst visitors.
- Craft experience Open Day at the Butcher's Hall – An on site opportunity to see work in progress on one of the Critical Projects and experience hands-on some of the skills involved in conservation work.
- Support training in heritage skills – Courses by Partner training providers for locally based apprentices and tradesmen in building as well as professionals working in the area.
- Produce a quarterly newsletter throughout the life of the THI with a project specific website.
- Introduce a seminar on the energy efficiency of old buildings in association with SPAB and English Heritage.

### **3.6 Consultation and involvement**

The Town and Borough Councils recognise that public involvement is the key to a self-sustaining historic environment. Integral to this will be the ongoing involvement of stakeholders through the TTHP. The Partnership has already conducted surveys of owners and occupiers of potentially eligible properties, which have revealed a high level of interest in active involvement with the THI when it is established.

Backing for the Tavistock THI was expressed in letters of support provided with the Stage 1 submission and has been repeated regularly throughout the Development Phase. Briefing notes were prepared for both Community and Business interests in respect of the Stage 2 process (See Appendices 11 and 12) and members of the Steering Group regularly attended both Business and Community network meetings.

It is clear, however, that owners will need further encouragement when the Partnership is able to be more specific during the delivery phase.

A wider public consultation was launched on 29 November 2013 with an exhibition in the Pannier Market. This was planned to coincide with the town's popular Dickensian Evening that starts the Christmas season each year. In addition to the THI, the exhibition addressed the revisions of the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan and options for public realm improvements. The exhibition was staffed for two days before it moved to the public library for the remainder of a seven-week consultation. The exhibition documents and questionnaire were also posted on both Councils' websites.

The outcome of the consultation was strong support for the aims of the THI and for a robust Conservation Area Management Plan. There was also a lively debate on proposals for the public spaces.

A summary of these consultations is included at Appendix 13

### **3.7 Putting the management plan into practice**

The published Conservation Area Management Plan (See Appendix 8) includes an Action Plan which defines a series of tasks, assigns responsibilities for carrying them out and sets timescales for achievement.

The timescales align with the THI as either Immediate Actions to be completed within 6-18 months or Medium-term Actions to be completed within 18 months to five years. Longer-term Actions are either aspirations or ongoing events, such as some of the complementary initiatives.

The efficient delivery of an effective heritage service requires regular monitoring of change and the agents of change. This is the responsibility of the Borough Council which is expected by the management plan to undertake:

- Periodic reviews of the effectiveness with which the service addresses pressures for change
- Updating of the baseline photographic survey on at least a four-year cycle
- Review of the Tavistock Conservation Area Character Appraisal on at least a five-year cycle
- Annual review and updating of the Tavistock Conservation Area Management Plan.

### **3.8 Commitment to the management plan**

The Conservation Area Management Plan provides the basis for the proper management and implementation of the THI. It will need to be monitored regularly and reviewed annually to ensure it remains relevant and continues to secure the protection and enhancement of the historic environment.

The Conservation Area Management Plan, this Stage 2 submission and a report of public consultations were considered by Tavistock Town Council at its meeting on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014 and April 2014 and by West Devon Borough Council at its meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> February and 29<sup>th</sup> April 2014. The outcome was a series of decisions that the Councils will:

- Adopt the revised versions of the Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan and support their proactive implementation throughout the lifetime of the THI and beyond
- Commit to using the full range of planning powers to ensure proper management of the Conservation Area (Borough Council)
- Commit to exemplary practice in the maintenance of property in their control (Town Council)



## Tavistock Townscape Heritage Initiative Scheme

- Support the monitoring and review of the Conservation Area Management Plan by the Tavistock THI Partnership on a regular basis

A copy of the relevant minutes of the decisions to this effect are provided at Appendix 14.



**St Eustacius Church**