

TO: ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 23 MARCH 2005

SUBJECT: WARWICK DISTRICT TOWNS CONSERVATION AREA ADVISORY FORUM (ANNUAL REVIEW)

FROM: PLANNING AND ENGINEERING

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide an annual progress report on the functioning of the Warwick Towns Conservation Area Advisory Forum.

2. BACKGROUND

The purpose of the Conservation Area Advisory Forum is to comment on listed building and planning applications within the Conservation Areas of Royal Leamington Spa, Warwick, Kenilworth and Whitnash. The composition of the Forum is made up of four elected Members one of whom is appointed as Chairman and representatives of local and national amenity groups and other interested bodies. In 2002, the Forum was expanded to include Warwick, Kenilworth and Whitnash within its remit and at that time it was agreed that the length of agenda and the officer time involved in preparing for the meetings, would be reviewed annually to ensure these elements of the functioning of the Forum remained within acceptable parameters.

The Annual Report last year covering 2003/04 detailed the average number of part 1 agenda items as between 26/27 per meeting, and an average of 10 items on Part 2. This is in line with the recommendations of the original report and has remained consistent over the past year.

In terms of staff time, this has also been reviewed and has also remained stable. With the help of new technology, and electronic procedures for preparing the agenda time has been marginally reduced. Cost of photocopying items to enable all Members to have a reduced copy of the principal plans has remained stable and similarly distribution of agendas has remained stable.

The current membership of the Forum is made up of four elected Members, one of whom is appointed as Chairman together with representatives from the Leamington Society, Warwick Society, Kenilworth Society, Whitnash Society, Central Leamington Residents Association, Leamington Chamber of Trade, Kenilworth Chamber of Trade, Warwick Chamber of Trade, Ancient Monuments Society, the Local Branch of the Royal Institute of British Architects, the Local Branch of the Royal Town Planning Institute, The Georgian Group and The Victorian Society. Last year concerns were expressed at lack of attendance of certain representative bodies and contact was made during the past year to help rectify this. To date, the Royal Institute of British Architects, the Whitnash Society and the Chamber of Trades from Leamington and Kenilworth have put forward new Members for the Forum. Members were also reminded that if they were unable to attend, a substitute should be sent to the meeting. This year the attendance of the remaining membership has remained stable.

Value and Effectiveness of the Forum

The Forum provides a level of open discussion on Planning and Listed Building applications and other factors affecting the Conservation Areas in Warwick District. A collective comment is then passed on to the Planning Committee or to officers dealing with the application to assist with the decision making process. Although each of the towns has a Town Council their role is rather different to that of the Conservation Area Advisory Forum whose main concern is the protection and enhancement of the Conservation Area in each town. The level of collective discussion also enables a high standard of response.

The provision of the CAAF is in line with the recommendations contained both within Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and PPG15, also fulfilling a significant public role in the field of consultation within the District.

Some concerns have been expressed at the omission of a meeting in May 2004, which coincided with the conclusion of the Council year which did mean certain applications did not go to CAAF, however, this has been rectified for 2005 with another meeting provided in May. Concerns have also been expressed that CAAF views are not always recorded in full at the Planning Committee, however, it is the Case Officer's duty to present all the salient points of consultees responses in a manageable Planning Committee report.

Discussion has taken place on a wider role of the CAAF, during the year and a suggestion has been expressed to involve the Forum in Development Briefs and other Conservation Area initiatives. In this respect Philip Clarke will attend a forum meeting to explain the new Planning Act and its implications and ways in which the forum can take a proactive role. In general terms any Development Brief for items of work which does not form part of a planning application but which affects a Conservation Area have been taken to the CAAF and their views recorded. During the past year, the CAAF have looked not only at applications but also the conservation area reviews in Warwick, Leamington and Kenilworth.

It has also been recommended by CAAF Members that all shopfront applications which are non contentious and not related to A3 uses should be put on Part II of the agenda, to allow more time for discussion on more significant items.

Discussion has taken place on the presentation of the Planning and Listed Building applications to the Forum and this has continued over the past year as a mixture of slides, printed photographs and the application drawings at the Planning Officer's discretion. In the longer term, it is hoped a digital presentation may be possible, however, at the present time staff time would not permit this form of presentation, however, it is hoped that it may be possible to gradually introduce this format.

3. POLICY AND BUDGET FRAMEWORK

The provision of Conservation Area Advisory Forum as a direct means of public participation in the Planning process. The present budget implication for serving the CAAF have already been discussed. The cost of servicing CAAF continues to be met within existing resources.

4. **CONCLUSION**

The review's processes have demonstrated that the number of applications dealt with on average has remained constant over the year and that the staff time in preparing the agendas and presentations has remained constant. The attendance at the Forum has marginally improved following contact with various non attending bodies last year.

5. **OUTCOME REQUIRED**

That the content of this report is noted and that Warwick Towns Conservation Area Forum continues in its present format servicing the four towns within the District.

That as the format and servicing of the Forum has remained stable, no further annual reports be presented unless changes are required to the present format of the Forum.

Alan Mayes
Principal Architect/Planner

BACKGROUND PAPERS CAAF Files.

Areas in District Affected: Leamington Spa, Warwick, Kenilworth & Whitnash

Executive Portfolio Area and Holder: Councillor Mrs. M. Begg

For further information about this report please contact:

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