



Report Cover Sheet

Name of Meeting:	Environment & Economic Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	
Report Title:	Warwick District Towns Conservation Area Advisory Forum (annual review)
Summary of report:	To provide an annual review of the functioning of the forum.
For Further Information Please Contact (report author):	Alan Mayes, Principal Architect Planner
Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Policy Framework:	No
Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budgetary framework:	No
Wards of the District directly affected by this decision:	Leamington, Kenilworth, Warwick and Whitnash
Key Decision?	Yes
Included within the Forward Plan?	Yes (If Yes, include reference number)
Is the report Private & Confidential	No
Background Papers:	CAAF files

Consultation Undertaken

Below is a table of the Council's regular consultees. However not all have to be consulted on every matter and if there was no obligation to consult with a specific consultee they will be marked as n/a.

Consultees	Yes/ No	Who
Other Committees	No	
Ward Councillors	No	
Portfolio Holders	Yes	Councillor J Hammon
Other Councillors	Yes	CAAF Members
Warwick District Council recognised Trades Unions	No	
Other Warwick District Council Service Areas	No	
Project partners	No	
Parish/Town Council	No	
Highways Authority	No	
Residents	No	
Citizens Panel	No	
Other consultees	Yes	CAAF representative members

Officer Approval

With regard to officer approval all reports must be approved by the report authors relevant director, Finance Services and Legal Services.

Officer Approval	Date	Name
Relevant Director(s)		Craig Anderson
Chief Executive	07.03.08	Chris Elliott
CMT		
Section 151 Officer		
Legal	07.03.08	Simon Best
Finance	07.03.08	Marcus Miskinis
Final Decision?		Yes
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)		

1. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1.1 That the content of this report is noted and that the Warwick Towns Conservation Area Advisory Forum continues, servicing the four towns within Warwick District.
- 1.2 That a survey is carried out of Planning Committee Members and Planning Officers to gauge the effectiveness of the CAAF and ascertain if any changes are necessary over the ensuing year.

2. **REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 **Purpose of Forum**

- 2.1.2 The purpose of the Conservation Area Advisory Forum is to comment to the Planning Officers and the Planning Committee 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 of the Council, one of whom is elected as Chair and representatives of local and national amenity groups and other interested bodies.

2.2 **Background of Forum**

- 2.2.1 It was agreed that an annual review would be carried out into the functioning of the Forum and the level of officer time required to service the Forum following the expansion of the Forum to include all four towns in 2002 to ensure this did not significantly exceed the original Council input. The length of agenda and split between part one (items for discussion) and part two (items not discussed) has remained consistent since the last report . The time taken servicing the Forum is now 14 hours per meeting of which 6 hours is the Conservation Officers time and 8 hours the administrative assistant. In 2002 the time taken to service the original Leamington Forum was 18 hours which increased to 24 hours per meeting with the expansion. The present timescale therefore reflects significant efficiencies.
- 2.2.2 The membership of the Forum comprises representatives who are professionals and specialists in their own field who attend in a voluntary capacity .The current membership of the Forum was augmented by the inclusion of the Warwickshire Gardens Trust and the Twentieth Century Society over the past year, following the agreement for their inclusion at the last annual review.
- 2.2.3 Over the past year the presentation photographs have been fully digitised. The drawings remain as paper copies as these are more easily scrutinised by Members than a PowerPoint presentation, although some attempts have been made at digital presentation of drawings, this does not allow sufficient scrutiny. The cost of paper copies of drawings has been monitored and these are now printed double sided to reduce costs following some concerns at the last annual review.
- 2.2.4 A significant additional layer of input from the Conservation Area Advisory Forum was agreed last year giving the CAAF an individual right to speak at Planning Committee. Notifications are sent through to the Forum and decisions made at each meeting who will take responsibility to speak for applications where it is considered necessary to restate the CAAF's view point particularly where it may be contrary to the recommendation proposed.

2.2.5 To date, during the past year, CAAF's right to speak has been taken up in about five significant applications.

2.3 The Value and Effectiveness of Forum

2.3.1 The Forum provides a level of open discussion on planning of listed building applications and other factors affecting the conservation area of the towns in Warwick District. The collective comment is then passed on to the Planning Committee or to officers dealing with the application to assist with the decision recommendation and condition making process. Though each of the towns has a Town Council their role is rather different to that of the Conservation Area Advisory Forum as its main concern is the protection and enhancement of the conservation area in each town. The list of applications, over the past year, where the CAAF comments has influenced the final outcome is attached as appendix A to this report.

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

2.3.3 Now that the Forum has representation at Planning Committee it is possible to challenge recommendations on applications directly to Planning Committee members where it is considered appropriate.

2.3.4 The Forum also has the opportunity to scrutinise various reports and documents which are produced for use in the conservation area. This has enabled members to report back to their respective organisations and so widening the consultation process.

2.3.5 Some concerns have been expressed at lack of attendance at the Forum from both Members and representatives including the Chambers of Trade. Open discussion has taken place between forum members concerning the lack of attendance and it was suggested that members who are not interested in the work of the forum could offer their place to someone else. It is recommended in this context that organisations be contacted where attendance has been poor.

2.3.4 Alternative means of improving the efficiency of the forum have been discussed by members including the possibility of e mailing applications to members and having meetings only for significant issues. This it was felt would be a significant loss of debate on each application and would be difficult to manage

2.3.5 In order to gauge the effectiveness of the forum by its users it is recommended that a survey is carried out of Planning Committee Members and Planning Officers over the forthcoming year and any suggested improvements made.

2.3.6 In order to give more time to discuss the more significant applications it is suggested that more smaller applications are put on part two of the agenda

3. **ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S) CONSIDERED**

- 3.1 An alternative would be for the forum to be discontinued in its present form and/ or a reduced format introduced, This would remove the element of discussion and reduce a significant level of public participation in the Planning process and if discontinued would not fulfil the recommendations of the Planning Act or Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 for the Historic Environment.

4. **BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK**

- 4.1 The present budget implication for servicing the CAAF has not changed over the past year. The cost per month for providing copies of drawings is an average of £33.50. This has been reduced to £14.80 by Members sharing double sided copies. The cost therefore continues to be met within existing resources. **It should also be noted that all representatives attend the forum in their own time at no cost to the Council.**

5. **POLICY FRAMEWORK**

- 5.1 The provision of a Conservation Area Advisory Forum is a direct means of public participation in the Planning Process as recommended by the Planning Acts and PPG15.