

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Old Town Conservation Area Management Plan</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>22 November 2018</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Executive Director of Economy, Environment &amp; Culture</b>		
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Tim Jefferies</b>	<b>Tel: 01273 293152</b>
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<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	<b>Regency</b>		

## **FOR GENERAL RELEASE**

### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 The report summarises the response to public consultation on the draft Old Town Conservation Area Management Plan and seeks approval to publish the final document. This follows on from the adopted Old Town Conservation Character Statement (2017).
- 1.2 The Management Plan sets out guidelines and recommendations for the future management of, and development within, the area. In this way the conservation area can benefit from opportunities that promote beneficial change and channel development pressure to help conserve the special qualities of the area. The Plan also promotes actions that would lead to the removal of Old Town from the Historic England 'at risk' register.
- 1.3 This is consistent with the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act), the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the City Plan Part One and the Conservation Strategy (2015).

### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 That the Committee agree that the Old Town Conservation Area Management Plan be approved for publication.

### **3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The Old Town conservation area was designated in 1973 and extended to include the promenade and beach area in 1977. The boundary is shown on the map at Appendix 1. The area was added to the Historic England 'at risk' register in 2016 and a Conservation Area Character Statement was adopted in March 2017. That document set out, at section 7, the potential issues for the future management of the area and this Management Plan has considered those issues further.
- 3.2 The Act states, at section.71, that a local planning authority should from time to time formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of a conservation area.

- 3.3 The Management Plan identifies current issues and pressures that are adversely impacting on the conservation area and management opportunities that can promote beneficial change and channel future development to help conserve the special character and appearance of the conservation area. It also promotes actions that would lead to the removal of Old Town from the Historic England 'at risk' register. The Plan is intended to guide the management of the area over the next 10 years and would then need to be reviewed.
- 3.4 The following key issues have been identified:
- Loss of traditional built and architectural features and materials
  - Poor quality shop fronts, blinds, signage and roller shutters
  - Paint colours
  - Street surfaces and paving
  - Street furniture and street clutter
  - Graffiti
  - Vacant buildings and sites, including vacant shop units
  - Potential for new development
  - The mix of uses and importance of small retail units
- 3.5 The Plan notes that Middle Street is the part of the area that is particularly suffering from a range of adverse issues. It further notes that the grade II\* listed Hippodrome is the single most significant vacant building or site within the Old Town and is the key to revitalising Middle Street and the wider Old Town area. The Plan sets out (at paragraphs 7.71-7.74) the constraints, opportunities and expectations for the future reuse and restoration of the Hippodrome site.
- 3.6 Other key vacant buildings and sites identified are:
- Middle Street Synagogue (listed grade II\*)
  - 78 West Street and 7/8 Middle Street
  - 8-12A South Street
  - 15 Ship Street and 14, 15, 16 Ship Street Gardens (grade II)
  - The ground floor of Clarendon Mansions, 80 East Street (grade II)
  - The rear of the former post office in Clarence Yard (grade II)
- 3.7 The Plan goes on to identify potential opportunities for public realm improvements, including in particular the area around Brighton Town Hall as part of any future scheme to make the Town Hall a more welcoming and efficient civic hub. Other key priorities for public realm improvements should be in Middle Street and Boyce's Street and to help revitalise Brighton Square. Previous public realm improvements in East Street and Duke Street are identified as now requiring an upgrade and better maintenance.
- 3.8 A series of future actions is recommended to preserve and enhance the conservation area. These include a programme of pro-active enforcement work; an initiative to address graffiti; an audit and review of street surfaces and street furniture and clutter; and consideration of potential additional planning controls over alterations and advertisements.

#### **4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 4.1 There would be an option to continue without a management plan in place but this option would be unlikely to lead to the removal of the Old Town conservation area from the Historic England 'at risk' register. It would also not be good practice and would risk the council failing its statutory duty under section 71 of the Act.

#### **5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 The Old Town Conservation Area Management Plan was drafted in consultation with a steering group representing local community and amenity groups with an interest in the area (including ward councillors). The steering group agreed a draft Management Plan, which reflected the concerns of the group members. The draft was then subject to a day-time public 'drop in' session at Friends Meeting House on 17 July, which was publicised via the steering group members, the local traders' association and social media. Comments made at the 'drop in' session were noted and the draft Management Plan was revised accordingly. Following that, there was a four week period of public consultation during late July and August. Fifteen responses were received in this period, which are summarised at Appendix 1.
- 5.2 The majority of the written responses referred to the Hippodrome site. Some amendments to the wording of the relevant paragraphs have been made in response to these comments, particularly in respect of the importance of safeguarding the future servicing of the Hippodrome from Ship Street. However, the Management Plan must consider the conservation area as a whole and is not a planning policy document; it can therefore only provide broad guidance on the future of the building and site, consistent with existing policy.
- 5.3 Other concerns raised related to vacant buildings and shops; street clutter (including waste bins); excessive signage (particularly A-Boards); poor quality shop fronts; poor quality and incoherent street surfaces; and graffiti. These issues had generally already been covered by the draft Management Plan but some amendments to wording and emphasis have been made in order to fully reflect the concerns.

#### **6. CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 The Management Plan complies with the council's duty under section 71 of the Act and sets out long terms guidelines and recommendations for the future management of the conservation area, so that it can benefit from opportunities that promote beneficial change and channel development pressure to conserve the special qualities of the area. This is expected to lead towards the removal of Old Town from the Historic England 'at risk' register.

#### **7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

##### Financial Implications:

- 7.1 The cost of a consultant to produce the Old Town Conservation Area Management Plan was funded from the existing Policy, Projects and Heritage

team budget, within the City Development and Regeneration service. Staff resources were used to run the steering group and undertake the consultation.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Gemma Jackson*

*Date: 15/10/18*

Legal Implications:

- 7.2 The council has a duty under section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to from time to time formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of a conservation area.
- 7.3 Section 71 includes a requirement that proposals under this section shall be submitted for consideration to a public meeting in the area to which they relate and that the local planning authority shall have regard to the comments expressed. The public 'drop in' session held at the Friends Meeting House on 17 July, at which the draft Management Plan was presented, fulfilled this requirement and the views expressed have informed the final draft.
- 7.4 It is important to note, as referenced in the body of the report, that the Management Plan is not a policy document. It cannot, therefore, introduce new policy but will be underpinned by policy in the council's development plan.

*Lawyer Consulted: Hilary Woodward*

*Date: 24/10/18*

Equalities Implications:

- 7.5 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA) of the Conservation Service was undertaken in 2010 and covered work on conservation area designation and review.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.6 The proposals in this report have no substantial impact upon the ten One Planet Principles of Sustainability. They contribute to the Culture & Community Principle by nurturing a sense of place which builds on local cultural heritage. They will help to ensure the long term sustainability of the conservation area.

Any Other Significant Implications:

- 7.7 None have been identified.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

### **Appendices:**

1. Map of the Old Town Conservation Area
2. Summary of consultation responses.

### **Documents in Members' Rooms**

1. Old Town Conservation Area Management Plan

### **Background Documents**

1. Brighton & Hove City Council - Conservation Strategy (2015)
2. Old Town Conservation Area Character Statement (2017)

