

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Conservation Advisory Group.
Conservation, Sustainability &
Community Planning Portfolio Holder

AUTHOR/S: Conservation Manager

8th December 2004

Buildings at Risk – progress and proposed action

Purpose

1. To present the current position on the Historic Buildings at Risk and seek support for the actions proposed in Appendix 1.

Effect on Corporate Objectives

2. Quality, Accessible Services	Action on Historic Buildings at Risk is a Conservation Performance Indicator (SP903)
Village Life	The restoration of historic buildings will often make a major contribution to the enhancement of the village character.
Sustainability	The viable re-use of historic buildings is a key contributor to the achievement of sustainability.
Partnership	Securing the future of historic buildings often involves the development of successful partnerships to coordinate action with local historical societies and property owners.

Background

3. Members will be aware that the revised SCDC performance plan includes action on historic buildings at risk as a key performance indicator (*SP903 – “Historic buildings at risk taken off the register as a percentage of all buildings at risk”.*)
4. A progress report was presented at the April 2004 Conservation Advisory Group. This current report updates the summary table presented at that time.

Considerations

5. It is important to note that the actual responsibility for the maintenance of historic buildings is with the owner NOT the Council. However, the Council is granted planning powers which enable it to intervene, where deemed necessary, to address the deterioration in the fabric of historic buildings and protect local amenity.
6. Inevitably, while action may be taken by the Council to tackle the condition of historic buildings using its planning powers, there will often be new buildings added to the list as their circumstances change. Further there are some buildings which present rather intractable problems for which a solution may take many years or a substantial commitment of resources. Consequently, while 4 buildings were removed from the at risk register, 7 were added as their condition became evident.
7. It is, therefore, considered essential to try to prioritise action on the urgent and achievable, while utilising a stepped approach to intervention. Consequently, it is important that members are able to review the actions of the team to meet the targets in the plan. The current actions are summarised in Appendix 1 to this report.

Options

8. Members are requested to note the contents of this report and consider the following options :
- i. That the Conservation Advisory Group agrees to accept the role of scrutinising the proposed action set out in Appendix 1, Historic Buildings at Risk – December 2004 and requires 6 monthly reports, to enable them to seek appropriate resources by the Conservation, Sustainability & Community Planning Portfolio Holder to intervene where necessary.
 - ii. That the Conservation Advisory Group recommends that the Conservation, Sustainability & Community Planning Portfolio Holder publishes the *Historic Buildings at Risk List* on the internet site on a six monthly basis to identify vacant buildings and encourage wider interest in their restoration and re-use.
 - iii. That the Conservation Advisory Group recommends that the Conservation, Sustainability & Community Planning Portfolio Holder seeks to maintain appropriate budgetary resources to enable the authority to intervene where necessary and meet its responsibilities under the acts.
 - iv. That the Conservation Advisory Group declines to support the proposed individual actions as set out above and Appendix 1, and suggests alternative methods to secure the future of these historic buildings.

Financial Implications

9. Action to arrest the deterioration of historic buildings may result in the use of planning powers and the commitment of financial resources by the Council. Where this is deemed necessary a separate report will be presented for consideration by the Conservation Advisory Group in order to seek authority for action from either portfolio holder or the Cabinet.

Legal Implications

10. The Council's has a responsibility under the planning acts to seek to secure the preservation of historic buildings and is granted powers to enable it to intervene where the fabric and life of the building is threatened.

Staffing Implications

11. None specific.

Risk Management Implications

12. None specific.

Consultations

13. None specific.

Conclusions/Summary

14. The Council has accepted its duty to seek to preserve historic buildings and the maintenance of a 'Historic Buildings at Risk Register' is a key tool which enables this responsibility to be implemented. It is considered that the use of the list might be improved by its wider publication, making it accessible on the Council's web site. It will be noted that English Heritage publish a national list for grade 1 and II* buildings only which includes two buildings in South Cambridgeshire.

Recommendations

15. That the Conservation Advisory Group :
- a. agrees to accept the role of scrutinising the proposed action set out in Appendix 1, to address historic buildings at risk list and requires 6 monthly reports, to enable them to seek appropriate resources by the Conservation,

Sustainability & Community Planning Portfolio Holder to intervene where necessary.

- b. recommends that the Conservation, Sustainability & Community Planning Portfolio Holder authorises the publication of 'South Cambridgeshire' *Historic Buildings at Risk List* on the internet site, on a six monthly basis to identify vacant buildings and encourage wider interest in their restoration and re-use.
- c. That the Conservation Advisory Group recommends that the Conservation, Sustainability & Community Planning Portfolio Holder seeks to maintain appropriate budgetary resources to enable the authority to intervene where necessary and meet its responsibilities under the acts.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: Appendix 1 – Historic Buildings at Risk – December 2004

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