

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

STRATEGIC PLANNING BOARD

Date of meeting: 27th May 2009
Report of: John Knight, Head of Planning and Policy
Title: Regents College, Nantwich

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To consider Regent's College in Nantwich for immediate inclusion on the List of Buildings of Local Interest.

2.0 Decision Required

- 2.1 To agree to include Regent's College on the Local List.

3.0 Introduction

- 3.1 There are many buildings or structures of special architectural or historic interest which appear as Listed Buildings in the national register of buildings of special architectural or historic interest compiled by the Secretary of State and these buildings are afforded significant layers of protection from demolition or harmful change, by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
- 3.2 There are other buildings or structures which are of distinct historical or architectural interest at the local level which are not on the national register and which can become threatened by potentially damaging change or demolition.
- 3.3 Therefore, all three of the former Borough Councils which comprise Cheshire East either maintained or were in the process of compiling lists of such locally important buildings and structures and put in place policies in the local plan to assist in protecting their character, through normal development control procedures. However they do not enjoy the full protection of those identified on the statutory national register of Listed Buildings compiled by the Secretary of State.
- 3.4 A separate report elsewhere on this agenda details the steps which are being put in place to amalgamate and review the existing local lists of the former authorities in order to generate a single list for Cheshire East. It also sets out proposed procedures to enable buildings of local interest which have come to light as a result of development proposals to be offered immediate protection by means of inclusion on the Local List, without a full review of the list or SPD needing to be undertaken.

- 3.5 Regent Theological College and the attached Grove House and Chapel are currently occupied by the Elim Bible College but are due to be vacated at the end of May 2009 and the site has been placed on the market with a view to redevelopment.
- 3.6 Elim Pentecostal Church who are the present owners use it as a college affiliated to the University of Wales and the University of Bangor.
- 3.7 Within the substantial grounds of the Theological College are a number of buildings of varying dates all constructed in brick (except for the rendered covered swimming pool) with a mixture of pressed brick and sandstone dressings and tiled and slate roofs.
- 3.8 In view of the imminent sale and redevelopment and for the reasons set out below, the buildings have now been identified as potential new candidates for immediate inclusion in the List of Buildings of Local Interest.

4.0 Assessment

Authenticity: Buildings or structures should be substantially unaltered and retain the majority of their original features.

- 4.1 The Theological College is a substantial three storey brick building in the Arts and Crafts style built in 1899, attached to which is a chapel dated 1924 in the same materials and overall style. The distinctive front sections of the Theological College and the chapel are substantially unaltered.
- 4.2 To the rear is the three storey brick Georgian building known as Grove House which was the original building on this large site which is set within its own grounds and lies between Crewe Road and London Road to the east of Nantwich. The addition of a floor to the distinctive front section of Grove House to the rear was an early addition to the building, carried out prior to the construction of the college building and demonstrates the evolution of this building and does not detract from its historical integrity.

Architectural significance: of good architectural quality or time period, a good example of a particular local buildings type or display good innovation or craftsmanship.

- 4.3 An approach to English Heritage was made by officers in November 2008 to request that the Theological College, the chapel and Grove House be included on the national register of buildings of special architectural or historic interest compiled by the Secretary of State, when they were identified following an approach by a property developer to re-develop the site prompted by its placement for sale on the open market.

- 4.4 English Heritage's decision has now been received and whilst it is not intended to include these buildings on the national register it concludes that the principal buildings of the Theological College, including the main administrative block, chapel and Grove House are of local interest.
- 4.5 The main college building is a good example of Arts and Crafts Architecture. It incorporates evidence building techniques and materials which were innovative at the time that the college was constructed and which were used for a comparatively short period of time.
- 4.6 The Chapel, which was built after the First World War is also a good example of the architecture of its time.

Historical: display physical evidence of periods of local economic or social significance, well known local historic events, people or designers.

- 4.1 The current college was constructed by the owner of the Grove House as a school for sons of impoverished clergymen until it closed in 1937. It was then used as a young offender's institute by the Roman Catholic Church and later as a remand home by the local authority.
- 4.2 The buildings also display evidence of a period of local social significance recorded in the plaque to former pupils who fell in the Great War. The Chapel also includes imagery within the stained glass windows that represent the values and attitudes of society at the time. They show agricultural scenes which represent a return to the land and a "wholesome" way of life after the horrors of war and the creation of a "land fit for heroes".
- 4.3 The group are therefore considered worthy of inclusion on the local list because of their contribution to the Arts and Crafts movement and because of their historical significance as an example of Victorian patronage and their connections with war time sacrifice.
- 4.4 Having taken all these findings into account and assessed these buildings against the approved criteria for their inclusion on the List of Buildings of Local Interest it is recommended that these buildings, which are of architectural and historic significance are of good architectural quality for their time period.
- 4.5 Their inclusion on the local list will enable their demolition to be resisted in any future development proposals, to potentially enable them to be converted to an appropriate alternative use incorporating only minimal changes to their original fabric and limiting any proposals for alterations to areas where change has already taken place

5.0 Recommendation

- 5.1 That the Theological College, its chapel and Grove House be added to the list of Buildings of Local Interest and that the owners be notified of their inclusion and sent details of what this means and the buildings selected will be registered as a land charge.

6.0 Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are no financial implications.

7.0 Legal Implications

- 7.1 To mitigate against the potential for appeals, costs and legal challenges.

8.0 Risk Assessment

- 8.1 There are no risks associated with this decision.

9.0 Reasons for Recommendation

- 9.1 To strengthen the Council's position in dealing with any planning applications for redevelopment or subsequent Appeals in order to ensure that a high quality scheme for the site is achieved and inappropriate development is resisted.

For further information:

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Background Documents:

- *Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2011*
- *PPG15: Planning and Historic Environment*

Documents are available for inspection at:

- *Municipal Buildings, Crewe*