

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Planning, Building Standards and Environmental Health Manager

Planning Committee: 19 April 2023

Subject: Dumbarton Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal

1. Purpose

- 1.1** To seek approval of the finalised Dumbarton Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** It is recommended that the Committee:
- (a) approves the finalised Dumbarton Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal (Appendix 1) and note that it will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications;
 - (b) agrees that the buildings listed in paragraph 4.7-4.9 be suggested to Historic Environment Scotland as suitable for listing, or for alterations to their existing listing;
 - (c) agrees that further consideration be given to amending the Dumbarton Conservation Area boundary as part of the next Local Development Plan process.

3. Background

- 3.1** The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 states that conservation areas are 'areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. Local authorities have a statutory duty to identify and designate such areas. They are also required to review existing conservation areas to ensure they are being managed effectively.
- 3.2** Conservation Area Appraisals should be prepared by authorities as a management tool which helps to identify the special interest and changing needs of an area. An appraisal provides the basis for the development of a programme of action that is compatible with the sensitivities of the historic area and enables local authorities to fulfil their statutory duties to protect and enhance conservation areas. Appraisals also inform policy and assist development management, and provide information to inform heritage funding bids.

4. Main Issues

- 4.1** The draft Conservation Area Appraisal for Dumbarton Town Centre was approved for consultation at the 15 September 2022 Planning Committee. It was published on 9 November 2022 with the consultation period running until 16 January 2023. The consultation was promoted via notification of persons/organisations in the Local Development Plan participant database, notification of premises that were affected by suggested changes to the listed building designations included in the draft Conservation Area Appraisal, social media and a press release. There was also a small exhibition in Dumbarton Library, and presentations were given to the Dumbarton Town Centre Forum and Dumbarton East and Central Community

Council.

- 4.2** Seventeen responses were received to the consultation document, sixteen from individuals and one from Historic Environment Scotland. A summary of the consultation responses and the Council's response to these is set out below, with more information on the responses set out in Appendix 2.

Changes to the conservation area boundary

- 4.3** The draft Conservation Area Appraisal suggested that the conservation area boundary should be amended to include Dumbarton Bridge to the west, and the Castle Street car park and the Denny Ship Model Experiment Tank to the east.
- 4.4** All seventeen responses supported the inclusion of Dumbarton Bridge in the conservation area. Twelve supported the inclusion of the Castle Street car park, whilst five, including Historic Environment Scotland did not. Fifteen responses supported the inclusion of the Denny Ship Model Experiment Tank, whilst two, including Historic Environment Scotland, did not. Historic Environment Scotland's comments on this matter are set out in Appendix 2.
- 4.5** A comment was received as to how the Artizan centre will be dealt with given its proximity to the conservation area. The impact of any redevelopment of the Artizan Centre on the conservation area would be a consideration in the assessment of any proposals received. One respondent also suggested that the town centre underpasses be included in the conservation area. The underpasses are of a different era and style of the rest of the conservation area, but could be considered to be of architectural/historic environment interest.
- 4.6** There is no need to change the Conservation Area Appraisal in response to these comments. The suggested changes remain valid and their inclusion in the document does not commit the Council to undertake the suggested changes. Any changes to the conservation area boundary would require a separate statutory procedure e.g. through the next review of the Local Development Plan. It would seem appropriate at that time to include Dumbarton Bridge in the conservation area boundary, with further consideration given to whether an eastern extension is appropriate, given the comments of Historic Environment Scotland. Inclusion of the underpasses could also be considered at that time.

Listed buildings

- 4.7** The draft Conservation Area Appraisal suggested that the following buildings should be listed:
- Dumbarton public library
 - Former Hiram Walker HQ (3 High Street)
 - Former Bank of Scotland (22 High Street)
 - Church Street/Castle Street tenements
 - Station Road/College Street tenements (suggested change of listing from C to B)
- 4.8** There was majority support from all respondents for these suggested changes to listing, and it is proposed that these suggestions be made to Historic Environment Scotland by the Council. The draft Conservation Area Appraisal also proposed the former Glasgow Savings Bank (12 High Street) and 6-8 High Street. Unfortunately these were left out of the consultation questionnaire, but it is proposed that the Glasgow Savings Bank and the blocks comprising 2-10 High Street are also

suggested to Historic Environment Scotland for listing. If any of these buildings are considered a candidate for listing, a statutory consultation will be undertaken by Historic Environment Scotland.

- 4.9** Additional buildings were suggested for listing through the consultation period. Of these, it is proposed that the suitability of the original slipways at Leven Quay and the Risk Street flat blocks be considered for listing through dialogue with Historic Environment Scotland. In addition, the changing of the listing of the United Reform Church on Leven Street from C to B should be suggested to Historic Environment Scotland. None of the other suggestions were considered suitable for the Council to suggest for listing for the reasons set out in Appendix 3. It is possible for individuals to make their own suggestions for listing directly to Historic Environment Scotland. There is no need to change the Conservation Area Appraisal in response to these comments.

Key Challenges

- 4.10** The consultation asked respondents to rank the key challenges for the conservation area that were set out in the appraisal document. Loss of original architectural detail, inappropriate modern additions to buildings, and use of inappropriate materials and repair techniques ranked as the highest challenges. It is considered that these and the other challenges set out in the appraisal document – poor quality shop fronts, unsightly gap sights and backlands, high shop vacancy rates and poor north-south connectivity - remain relevant for inclusion within the appraisal document.

Management Plan

- 4.11** There was majority support for the preparation of a management plan for the conservation area. Such a document would assist in the prioritisation and co-ordination of preservation and enhancement initiatives, as well as identifying resources. The recommendation for a management plan should remain in the appraisal document, although it should be recognised that the funding for the preparation of such a document would need to be identified.

Opportunities

- 4.12** The draft Conservation Area Appraisal listed general opportunities for preservation and enhancement relating to the provision of information and advice on the conservation area, and the importance and benefits of looking after buildings. Comments received included questions on who this guidance was for, and the wording of the appraisal document has been amended to offer clarification.

Recommended Initiatives

- 4.13** The draft Conservation Area Appraisal included a broad set of specific initiatives to improve the town centre, including greater control of changes to unlisted buildings, improvements to backland areas, gap sites and the riverside frontage, comprehensive improvements to shopfronts and reviewing car parking provision to create more useable greenspace in the town centre. Eleven respondents agreed or strongly agreed with these initiatives and none disagreed. The comments received are not considered to require changes to the draft appraisal document.

Next steps

- 4.14** On approval by the Planning Committee, the Conservation Area Appraisal will be

finalised and will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. The document will also inform any funding bids for conservation area enhancement. The Council will contact Historic Environment Scotland to suggest the buildings referred to in paragraphs 4.7-4.9 be listed or have their current listing revised. The suggested amendments to the conservation area boundary will be considered as part of the new Local Development Plan process.

- 4.15** The Conservation Area Appraisal should strengthen the Council's position to seek funding for improvements and enhancements to the Conservation Area, for example from Historic Environment Scotland's Heritage and Place Programme, which can offer grants of between £750k and £1.5m covering up to 50% of costs and its Historic Environment Grants Programme, which can offer grants up to £500k, covering up to 25% of costs. Both schemes can fund repair works, skills and training, community/outreach projects, and maintenance/management plans.

5 People Implications

- 5.1** There are no personnel issues associated with this report.

6 Financial and Procurement Implications

- 6.1** The cost of preparing the Conservation Area Appraisal has been met from existing budgets.
- 6.2** Funding available from Historic Environment Scotland would require match funding to be provided by the Council, building owners or other funding sources.

7 Risk Analysis

- 7.1** It was not considered necessary to carry out a risk assessment on the matters covered by this report.

8 Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 8.1** The Conservation Area Appraisal has been screened and it is not relevant to any of the impact assessment areas.

9 Environmental Sustainability

- 9.1** A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) pre-screening notification was submitted to the Scottish Government SEA Gateway. It is considered that the Conservation Area Appraisal will not have any significant environmental impact in its own right, and any impacts (e.g. through decision-making) are likely to be positive.

10 Consultation

- 10.1** Details of the consultation undertaken are set out in paragraph 4.1.

11 Strategic Assessment

- 11.1** The Conservation Area Appraisal is considered to support the Council's strategic priorities, and in particular:
- Our Communities – Resilient and Thriving

- Our Environment – A Greener Future

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Date: 19th April 2023

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Appendices:	<p>Appendix 1 – Dumbarton Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal.</p> <p>Appendix 2 - Dumbarton Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal – summary of responses to the consultation draft</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Assessment of suggested listed buildings</p>
Background Papers:	<p>Dumbarton Town Centre Conservation Area Proposal Report b y Austin Smith Lord July 2018</p> <p>Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening.</p> <p>Strategic Environmental Assessment Pre-Screening Report</p>
Wards Affected:	<p>Ward 2 – Leven</p> <p>Ward 3 – Dumbarton</p>