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Stanley Park conservation area management plan

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Stanley Park Conservation Area Management Plan

October 2017

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1. Introduction

This report has been prepared by Blackpool Council and forms part of the Council's commitment to increasing the understanding, and care, of Blackpool's historic built environment.

An online public consultation was carried out from 17th July to 31st August 2017. In addition, copies of the draft management plan and feedback sheets were made available in Central Library and at the Stanley Park Visitor Centre. There was also a drop-in session at the visitor centre on Saturday 5th August so that members of the public could ask questions about the proposed management plan. Feedback from the consultation has been included in this final version of the management plan.

2. Stanley Park Conservation Area

Summary of Conservation Area Value

The Stanley Park Conservation Area is centred on Stanley Park itself. The park is listed as Grade II* on Historic England's Register of Parks and Gardens and was constructed between 1924 and 1926 to designs by Thomas Mawson. The park and surrounding streets were designated a conservation area in January 1984.

The Park is a superb example of an early 20th Century public park with contemporary integral sports and leisure facilities. The Park is

relatively untouched with few changes to the overall layout and little change to the built structures within it.

The park itself contains a number of buildings of local interest in addition to the pleasure grounds, boating lake sports facilities and key tourist attractions. These attractions include Blackpool Model Village, Stanley Park Golf Course and Blackpool Cricket Club.

The streets around the Park contain intact and well preserved examples of high quality interwar housing, many on a large scale with attendant gardens, boundary treatments and public realm features, all laid out to a street plan specified by Mawson. All are contemporary with, and complementary to, the park.

Problems which Threaten the Conservation Area

Modern doors, upvc windows and rainwater goods have often replaced original materials. Some front gardens have been lost to hard-standing for cars, and boundary walls have been shortened to widen driveways. Front gardens and relatively low boundary walls in the Conservation Area contribute to the essential character of the public realm and should be retained wherever possible. Re-planting in front gardens will be encouraged, and high fences will not be permitted. Applications for microgeneration measures such as solar panels, which could affect the character of the conservation area, have not been received so far.

Side extensions in the past have narrowed the spaces between some houses. These spaces together with the front gardens and boundary treatments contribute to the setting of the individual houses, and should be retained.

Although there is some variety in the design and materials of buildings which creates interest, the overall palette of materials and colours is consistent, and these should be maintained. In future, repairs and alterations to houses and other buildings within the Conservation Area must comply with the [Conservation Area Guidance documents](#). Planning permission may be required and you should contact the Built Heritage and Conservation Team for advice on 01253 476332 or email builtheritage@blackpool.gov.uk

The lack of an operational budget has been a major problem within the park itself, coupled with anti-social behaviour issues ranging from repeated vandalism to dog owners allowing fouling in and around the park. In many ways, the sheer size of the park is a problem.

Covering approximately 256 acres, the park contains upwards of 40 buildings in various states of repair.

In some cases, the lack of a suitable and sustainable use also contributes to the decline and disrepair of park buildings.

Some of the issues related to poor condition and disintegrating infrastructure within the park were tackled under the 2005 HLF £5.5m restoration scheme.

However, more recent financial restraints and staff cutbacks have exacerbated the problem of ensuring a sustainable future for the park. Many buildings are still in disrepair, and development pressure in recent years has led to the creation of additional facilities such as a new adventure playground and the BMX track. The latter in particular was a high profile and controversial development which has had a visible impact on a low lying area of the park. Whilst developments like these are sometimes controversial, they have been undertaken to widen the appeal of the Park to include modern day uses in order to increase visitor numbers.

Currently there are a number of areas – the bandstand including theatre and surrounding walls, clock tower, the lake including bridges, Italian gardens steps and balustrading, tree stock, buildings around the bowling greens, tennis courts and toilets - needing urgent repair which, even in isolation, will require substantial financial input.

The lack of clean and adequate toilet provision was a recurring issue raised in public consultation responses. The toilet facilities provided near to



Attractive and well-maintained pair of semi-detached houses on North Park Drive



Former disused tennis pavilion which suffers from repeated vandalism



View of BMX track from East Park Drive



Male and female toilets at the entrance to the bowling greens

the visitor centre and bowling greens are closed by 3.30 p.m., and the only other facilities within the park are in the café, which itself closes at 4 p.m. and only available for customers.



Missing balustrade on café terrace

There were several complaints about the condition and cleanliness of the existing toilet block.

One respondent was aware, and critical of, proposals to convert the ladies toilet block into a unisex Danfo block.

Vandalism was also a recurring theme in public consultation feedback, with the suggestion that security should be improved to prevent anti-social behaviour within the park. At the drop-in session in August it was pointed out that, when the organisers of one event in the park provided security patrols for the duration of the event, there were no incidents of anti-social behaviour.

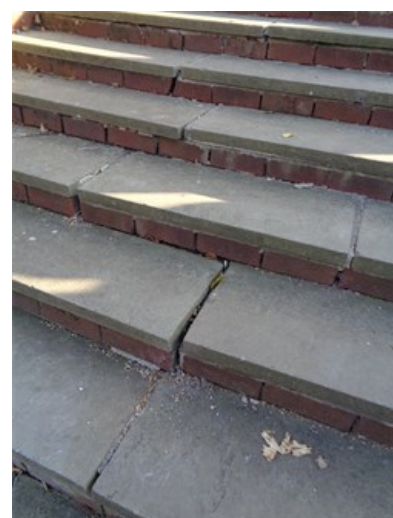
Comments were also received on the poor condition of the lake in some parts, with areas overgrown with weeds. Lack of some general maintenance with regards to grass cutting was also mentioned.

A regular visitor with children commented that the lake could be used as an educational resource, citing Martin Mere as an example. Provision of a classroom/visitor centre with educational resources could provide a new use for a redundant building, supported with interpretation boards and activities.

3. Conservation Area Objectives

Given the relatively limited problems caused by managing change and built quality issues within the Conservation Area, the current objectives are:

- Supporting and working with the Parks Service to ensure the continuation of restoration works within the park to address the widest number of areas possible relative to funding; although the 2005 HLF grant addressed many issues there is now a backlog of repairs which are unable to be tackled due to financial cutbacks, and which are beginning to impact on the public's enjoyment of the park. The Built Heritage and Conservation Team will assist in seeking to identify funding and/or encouraging community groups to do the same to add to the overall mix of restoration, conservation and amenity enhancement within the park area.
- The issues raised by the public consultation will be included in discussions regarding funding priorities.
- Guidance on appropriate forms of repair, alteration and extension of buildings within the Conservation Area have been produced to accompany guidelines of workmanship and materials to enable residents to alter and develop their properties sensitively and in an informed manner.
- The park's encircling boulevards were intended to be lined with trees, and re-planting of trees where necessary will be welcomed. Trees in private gardens may be pruned as necessary, but should be retained unless the roots are causing damage to property. Trees removed for the latter reason should be replaced in another part of the garden wherever possible.
- The Built Heritage and Conservation Team will work with the Highways Department to ensure that, when works are being considered, surface materials, street furniture design, signage, tree planting, traffic management measures etc., are such that they preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. In due course a design code for highways works in Conservation Areas will be produced in conjunction with the Highways Department.
- A heritage trail was produced a few years ago by the Blackpool Civic Trust in partnership with the Council to raise awareness of historical and design significance of the park, and the links between the park and its surrounding urban context. It may be useful to update the trail to include more information on the many individual buildings with the assistance of volunteers.
- Nationally accredited heritage tour guides run walking tours around the park to raise awareness, understanding and enjoyment of its heritage.
- A photographic record of the conservation area was made as part of the production of the conservation area management plan. This will serve as a baseline survey for the area, and will be used to monitor unauthorised change. Further surveys will be undertaken from time to time.
- A key benefit of applying the Conservation Area objectives will be improvements to the built and natural heritage which will have the potential to attract more residents and visitors into Stanley Park.



Steps down from Italian Garden in need of repair (recently repaired and re-opened to public)

4. Planning Policies

Normal conservation planning policies apply within the Conservation Area. The Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy (2012 – 2027) was adopted in January 2016. Certain policies in the Saved Blackpool Local Plan have been superseded by policies in the Core Strategy; other policies in the Saved Blackpool Local Plan will remain in use until Part 2 of the new Local Plan is produced. The Saved Blackpool Local Plan 2001-2016 was adopted in June 2006 and the majority of its policies saved by direction in June 2009.

Any new development will be required to protect and enhance the character, quality and setting of existing conservation areas and

notable buildings of heritage value. In addition, the Council will also have full regard to the following documents when making decisions regarding the Stanley Park Conservation Area:

- The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 which provides the main legislative policy base for the conservation of the historic environment.
- The National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Policy guidance, which replace all previous planning policy and guidance for the built environment.

5. Planning Measures

Blackpool Council is committed to using its statutory powers in support of the Stanley Park Conservation Area and to help to make sure that its conservation policies are put into practice.

Control of New Development

Statutory Powers

- Where necessary the Council will take enforcement action against unauthorised development where it has a detrimental impact on the character of the Conservation Area.
- Where necessary the Council will deploy the resources necessary to serve Urgent Works and Repair Notices on property owners who neglect historic buildings.
- Where necessary the Council will issue new Article 4 Direction Orders where permitted development rights need to be removed as a result of changes in legislation.
- In extreme cases the Council will apply for a Compulsory Purchase Order and take ownership of a property where a mutually acceptable negotiated position cannot be reached.

6. Design Guidance and Conservation Standards

The Council is committed to achieving a high quality of design and materials for all new development within the Conservation Area.

All projects will be required to build on the quality inherent in traditional buildings and ensure that new works pay the same attention to the quality of design and materials. Projects within the Stanley Park Conservation Area will be required to have regard to the Council's Conservation Area Guidance document in order to ensure that the highest standards are achieved, be they part of repair, reinstatement or new development works.

Quality Assurance Measures for Conservation Areas

The quality of character within the Conservation Area will be maintained using the following measures:

- Encouraging applicants to appoint an Architect (preferably RIBA) to provide a full or partial service in designing any alteration or extension works.
- Encouraging the appointment conservation specialists and tradesmen with experience of similar types of work.
- The Conservation Officer will provide assistance and guidance to applicants upon request. Pre-application fees for site visits are applicable but planning applications for work which is required as a result of removal of rights through an article 4 direction order are free of charge.
- Drawings illustrating the proposals are to be submitted both at pre-application stage and for planning approval. Planning applications should include a heritage statement describing the significance of the conservation area, details of the proposed works, and an assessment of the impact of the proposals on the property and the conservation area as a whole. Heritage Statement Guidance is available on the Council website.
- Conservation Area Guidance and workmanship specification guidelines will be available on the website as resources for all applicants.
- The boundaries of the Conservation Area will be reviewed every 5 years, and the article 4 direction order will be updated as required in line with any changes to permitted development legislation.
- The Conservation Area will be monitored, and enforcement action will be taken against works undertaken without the appropriate planning permission which have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

7. Training and Education

Training

Blackpool Council will take responsibility for ensuring that its own staff are appropriately equipped with any additional training required to deliver the objectives for the Conservation Area. The Council employs a fully qualified Conservation Officer.

Education

The Council, as part of its Heritage Strategy will work to widen the appreciation of the heritage of the Conservation Area.

Heritage Trail

Heritage trails for the Park have been devised covering both the natural and built heritage of the Park and its surrounding urban context. They are available to download on the [Friends of Stanley Park website](#).

8. Consultation and Involvement

The aim of the statutory consultation process for the designation of the Conservation Area was to introduce the concept of statutory protection to the building owners within the proposed boundary of the area and to open discussion about what they themselves felt about the processes and ideas inherent in statutory control. The designation of the Conservation Area in 1984 received wide support both from the stakeholder groups and local residents.

Conservation Area Management Plans are seldom successful unless they secure the full backing of local communities. A good partnership between the Council (as owners and maintainers of the Park) and both Blackpool Civic Trust and the Friends of Stanley Park has been established for some time. The Conservation and Built Heritage Team have liaised closely with the Parks Team in the production of this document, and would like to thank them for their input.

The partnership is now working to involve wider community groups from outside the Conservation Area itself in recognition of the fact that the Park and the Conservation Area as a whole are joint community assets. This approach will help ensure that projects are sustainable in the long-term and that no stakeholder is disenfranchised in the decision-making processes.

9. Putting the Management Plan into Practice

The Conservation Area Management Plan will be put into practice by Blackpool Council, which will take responsibility for developing and implementing the Conservation Area Management Plan. The team responsible for advancing the Conservation Area Management Plan will be the Built Heritage and Conservation Team.

10. Commitment to the Management Plan

Blackpool Council will deploy its corporate resources and staff skills to support the delivery of the Management Plan.

The Conservation Area will be regularly monitored to identify any unauthorised works, which may be subject to enforcement action. In addition, the boundaries of the Conservation Area will be reviewed within two years of the publication of this management plan in order to determine whether they should be amended.

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