

Beauchief Hall

CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS

Final Draft March 2007



MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS

BEAUCHIEF HALL CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS

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1. Introduction

1.1 The recommendations in this document are based upon the findings the Beauchief Hall *Conservation Area Appraisal*, which assesses the special interest of the Beauchief Hall Conservation Area and identifies negative factors and weaknesses which detract from the conservation area's character and appearance.

1.2 Based upon the appraisal and supported up by a further site survey, this document identifies a number of specific and general issues affecting the Beauchief Hall Conservation Area, including enhancement opportunities, negative features and threats. Each issue is accompanied by recommendation(s) for action, sometimes identifying further or more detailed work needed for their implementation.

1.3 The recommendations include proposals for enhancement and policies for the avoidance of harmful change, some of which are the responsibility of the City Council

1.4 The proposals are written in the awareness that in managing the City's conservation areas the Council's resources are limited and therefore need to be prioritised. Financial constraints on the Council mean that proposals for which it is responsible may take longer than is desirable to implement. However, the Council will continue to encourage improvements to the conservation area in co-operation with property owners, groups and local businesses.

1.5 The structure and scope of this document is based on the suggested framework published by English Heritage in *Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas* (2005). Both the Conservation Area Appraisal and the Management Proposals will be subject to monitoring and reviews on a regular basis (see below)

2. Legislative background

2.1 This document reflects Government guidance set out in Planning Policy Guidance 15: 'Planning and the Historic Environment' and satisfies the statutory requirement of section 71(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 namely:

"It shall be the duty of the local planning authority from time to time to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas."

2.2 The *Sheffield Unitary Development Plan (UDP)* is the statutory development plan for Sheffield, adopted in March 1998. Policies BE15-22 relate to historic buildings, conservation areas, historic parks and gardens and archaeology (pages 76-86).

Other key documents include:

- The emerging *Sheffield Development Framework (SDF)*.
- *Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG): Designing House Extensions*.
- *Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG): Sheffield's Historic Parks and Gardens, 1998*.
- *UDP Policy Background paper No. 4: Sheffield's Historic Parks and Gardens 1998*.
- *Sheffield Urban Design Compendium (2004)*.
- *Sheffield Buildings at Risk Survey (2005) and emerging Buildings at Risk Strategy*.
- *Planning Policy Guidance 16: Archaeology (HMSO)*

2.3 Up-to-date details of current planning policy can be obtained from Sheffield City Council's Development Services or the Council's website at: www.sheffield.gov.uk/in-your-area/planning-and-city-development

2.4 Breaches of planning control that are causing significant harm and are clearly unacceptable will be enforced against. A planning application may be invited where breaches of planning control might be acceptable, possibly with amendment. This will enable the issues to be thoroughly tested, including consulting local people.

2.5 Sheffield City Council have signed up to the 'Enforcement Concordat' (1998), which sets national best practice standards for planning enforcement. The concordat can be viewed and downloaded from: www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/regulation/reform/enforcement_concordat

2.6 Other specific strategies that will impact upon this management plan either currently being developed or already adopted:

- Woodland Policy (1987)
- Sheffield Nature Conservation Strategy (1991)
- Forthcoming Tree Strategy (proposed 2007)

2.7 In addition, the Council has produced Supplementary Planning Guidance entitled 'Historic Parks and Gardens' which was approved by Planning and Economic Development Programme Committee on 8th January 1998. It was produced to provide the local schedule of sites covered by Policy BE21 of the Unitary Development Plan, as the local schedule was produced after the UDP was adopted. The policy states that

"The character, setting and appearance of historic parks and gardens will be protected"

3. Issues and recommendations

3.1 The special interest of the Beauchief Hall Conservation Area is Beauchief Hall and environs (a grade II* listed 17th century country house) and Beauchief Hall's formal gardens and pleasure grounds that are registered grade II in English Heritage's *Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England*.

3.2 With the exception of the stone-built clubhouse (1987), the principal buildings within the conservation area, including steps, forecourt walls and gate piers, have the statutory protection of listing. The issues below therefore relate to weaknesses and threats to the surrounding park and gardens.

3.3 Sub-division of the historic park and garden

3.3.1 The historic park and garden has already undergone a degree of sub-division mainly as a result of periodic changes in the use of the land, possibly following a change in land ownership. For example, an area to the west of Beauchief Hall has been demarcated as a sports ground and an area to the east has been in use as a nursery. This sub-division has begun to spoil the overall coherence of the park whilst boundary definition (e.g. fence or hedge) visibly disrupts views and feeling of spaciousness.

Recommendation:

- *The Council will normally resist the further sub-division of the historic park and garden.*

3.4 Loss of built features

3.4.1 The principal historic buildings in the conservation area are protected by listing. There are, however, other structures associated with the historic park which have considerable historic interest and should be preserved. These include a small stone grotto approached by a flight of stone steps beside the stream in Gulley's Wood, lengths of 19th century iron estate fencing, a short flight of stone steps at the east end of the 'Fir walk' and a rectangular

raised viewing platform in coursed random stone beside the woodland walk west of Beauchief Hall. These features are identified in the park's entry in *English Heritage's Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest*.

Recommendation:

- *The Council will encourage the careful restoration of park and garden features;*
- *The Council will normally resist any proposal to demolish or alter features that can be shown to be an intrinsic part of the grade II registered historic park and garden, in particular any feature noted in the list description that accompanies the park's entry in English Heritage's Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest.*

3.5 Introduction of new planting

3.5.1 The historic park and garden, derived from late 17th century formal gardens and pleasure grounds, is notable for its trees and greenery much of which dates from the 19th century and earlier. Twentieth century planting, notably a line of leylandii and self-seeded scrub growth to the east of Beauchief Hall is out of character and unsightly.

Recommendation:

- *The Council will only support additional planting within the conservation area where it can be shown to be in keeping with the historic character, setting and appearance of the park and garden.*
- *The Council will encourage the removal of planting and/or plant growth that is out of keeping with the character of the historic park.*

3.6 Potential decline and loss of trees

3.6.1 Trees, especially those beside the 'Fir Walk', are a vital part of the landscaping and make a significant contribution to the semi-rural ambience

of the conservation area and the setting of its historic buildings.

Recommendation:

- *The preparation of a Tree Management Programme would be welcome, identifying all mature trees within the conservation area (privately as well as publicly owned) and ensuring that priorities are agreed and funding set aside for the costs involved in remedial works or replacement;*
- *The Council will normally resist proposals to cut down a tree in the conservation area.*

3.7 Nature conservation especially maintenance of ponds

3.7.1 Being mainly rural and surrounded by woods and green open space, the conservation area is an area of natural history interest and forms part of Sheffield's Green Network as identified in the Sheffield Unitary Development Plan 1998 (see policies GE 10 -17). Of particular note are a series of three irregular ponds to the south of the lawned area in front of Beauchief Hall. Ponds are indicated in this position on a plan of 1810. The ponds enhance the semi-rural character of the conservation area and are important wildlife habitats.

Recommendation:

- *The Council will work with local environmental conservation groups to ensure the ponds are protected and enhanced as wildlife habitats.*

3.8 Archaeological issues

3.8.1 The whole of the conservation area has archaeological potential above and below the ground, and it is likely that further consideration will need to be given to the effect of applications for substantial new development.

Recommendation

- *An Archaeological Assessment of the site should be prepared prior to any application being submitted. Where below ground archaeological remains are expected, conditions may then be used to secure a detailed scheme for the foundation design and all new ground works, to protect buried remains in situ, and/or a programme of archaeological excavation, recording, analysis and publication. Further information is available from the South Yorkshire Archaeology Service.*
- *Where substantial alteration/demolition of listed buildings or other historic buildings is proposed a more detailed Building Appraisal will also be required. This includes a detailed appraisal of the special architectural or historic interest of the buildings on the site. The results will inform the design process and act as supporting information with a planning application.*
- *An AABA (Archaeological Assessment and Building Appraisal) should be prepared prior to the application being submitted. Once a satisfactory scheme has been agreed, conditions may then be used to secure a programme of building recording, analysis and publication. Further information is available from Sheffield City Council's conservation section.*

3.9 Use of Beauchief Hall and surrounding park and garden

3.9.1 Beauchief Hall was originally a large country house then a school and is currently in office use. Each different use brings with it a range of pressures on the local environment. For instance, the current uses (office, sports ground) appear to require a large car parking area and a kerbed vehicular access road with speed humps neither of which enhance the historic character of the park. Intensification of current use or change to another use may result in further degradation of the park

Recommendation:

- *The Council will try to ensure that changes in the occupancy of Beauchief Hall do not lead to lack of continuity in the upkeep of the Hall's grounds;*
- *When considering an application for change of use, the Council will be mindful of the possible effects of the proposed new use on the character, setting and appearance of the historic park.*

3.10 Ongoing care, maintenance and parkland conservation

3.10.1 The principle of parkland conservation is to protect and retain the original historic fabric where possible, to accurately repair where needed, and to sustain its ecological and amenity value.

Recommendation:

- *The Council will encourage appropriate maintenance of the historic park and make tenants and landowners aware of the guidance available in the English Heritage publication, 'Farming the Historic Landscape – Caring for Historic Parkland', a document designed to help farmers, land managers and farm advisers identify historic parkland features and ensure their conservation through appropriate management.*

4. Monitoring and Review

4.1 As recommended by English Heritage, this document should be reviewed every five years from the date of its formal adoption. It will need to be assessed in the light of the emerging Local Development Framework and government policy generally. A review should include the following:

- A survey of the conservation area including a full dated photographic survey to aid possible enforcement action;
- An assessment of whether the various recommendations detailed in this document have been acted upon, and how successful this has been;
- The identification of any new issues which need to be addressed, requiring further actions or enhancements;
- The production of a short report detailing the findings of the survey and any necessary action;
- Publicity and advertising.

4.2 It is possible that this review could be carried out by the local community under the guidance of a heritage consultant or the City Council. This would enable the local community to become more involved with the process and would raise public consciousness of the issues, including the problems associated with enforcement.

5. Useful contacts and addresses

For information on listed buildings and conservation areas:

Urban Design and Conservation Team
Sheffield City Council,
Howden House,
1 Union Street,
Sheffield S1 2SH.
Tel: 0114 273 5804

www.sheffield.gov.uk/in-your-area/planning-and-city-development/urban-design-conservation

For information on the status and interpretation of the statutory Development Plan and supplementary planning guidance:

Forward and Area Planning Team
Sheffield City Council,
Howden House,
1 Union Street,
Sheffield S1 2SH.
Tel: 0114 273 4157

For further information relating to listed buildings and conservation areas:

English Heritage
37 Tanner Row
York
YO1 6WP
Tel: 01904 601901

For an excellent range of technical advice leaflets:

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB),
37 Spital Square, LONDON E1 6DY Tel: 020 7377 1644

The Georgian Group,
6 Fitzroy Square, LONDON W1T 5DX Tel: 0207529 8920

The Victorian Society,
1 Priory Gardens, Bedford Park, LONDON W4 1TT Tel: 0208994 1019

The Twentieth Century Society,
70 Cowcross Street, LONDON EC1M 6EJ Tel: 020 7250 3857

6. Photographs



A well in the form of a stone grotto beside the stream in Gully's Wood.



Trees, especially those beside 'Fir Walk', are a vital part of the landscaping.



Historic ponds are an attractive feature and an important wildlife habitat.



Ongoing care, maintenance and conservation of the parkland are important.



Changes to the use of Beauchief Hall should not be allowed to lead to lack of continuity in ground maintenance.



New surface for the public footpath through the woods.



One of several stone features in Ladies Wood that should be preserved



New planting should be in keeping with the historic character of the park.

7. Summary of consultation undertaken

A consultation draft of this document was subject to a period of consultation between 22nd January and 16th February 2007. All local residents in the conservation area were sent copies of the document along with a survey form asking for their comments. Residents were also invited to contact the Urban Design and Conservation Team if they wished to discuss the Appraisal or Management Proposals further. Local members and local community groups were also consulted as part of the process.



