

**CONSULTATION - HELENSBURGH TOWN CENTRE CONSERVATION AREA
PROPOSAL**

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to ask for Member endorsement to progress towards a consultation exercise that would ask local people for their views on a Helensburgh Town Centre Conservation Area and its potential boundary.
- 1.2 The consultation would take place over a six-week period from 1st May to 12th June 2019, subsequent to which, a paper would be taken to PPSL to seek approval to progress towards conservation area designation.
- 1.3 All planning authorities are required from time to time to determine which of their areas meet the criteria for designation as an area of special architectural or historic interest under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997. During scoping analysis of the buildings and townscape of Helensburgh there was found to be sufficient quality of historic built fabric and special character to merit such consideration.
- 1.4 The analysis was undertaken in support of an application to Historic Environment Scotland (HES) for Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) funding. The application was submitted on the basis that there would appear to be merit for a conservation area; a conservation area being a key eligibility requirement for a CARS project. Consideration of the application has therefore been deferred by HES to allow time for all eligibility criteria to be met.
- 1.5 The Helensburgh CARS application was submitted alongside a bid for a Lochgilphead CARS, which has secured £969,700 and which will be delivered between 2019 and 2024. In addition to Lochgilphead, Argyll and Bute Council has been successful in securing a total of £4,344,781 in CARS funding for the town centre conservation areas of Campbeltown, Rothesay, Inveraray, Dunoon and Lochgilphead.
- 1.6 If a conservation area is designated in 2019, the application for CARS funding to the value of £1.5m would be determined in the early part of 2020. If successful, a Helensburgh CARS project would target buildings in the town

centre requiring substantial repair and be delivered over a five-year period between 2020 and 2025.

- 1.7 At the meeting of 21st February 2019, and as part of the budget setting process, Council agreed to a financial contribution to a potential Helensburgh CARS to the value of £500,000.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that Members of the Helensburgh and Lomond Area Committee:

- a) Endorse a six-week consultation period on the potential for a Helensburgh Town Centre Conservation Area designation; and
- b) Note that consideration of the Helensburgh Town Centre application for CARS funding has been deferred until early 2020, and relies upon a town centre conservation area having been designated.

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3.0 INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 The purpose of this report is to ask Members to endorse a consultation exercise that asks local people whether they would support the idea of a Helensburgh Town Centre Conservation Area and whether they would make any amendments to the initial proposed boundary.
- 3.2 The rationale for a conservation area has been established through initial analysis undertaken to inform a bid to Historic Environment Scotland (HES) for Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) funding, and through the Helensburgh Making Places exercise. The merits of a conservation area requires further exploration, and it is best practice to consult on the proposals. A six-week consultation period is therefore proposed to run between 1st May and 12th June 2019.
- 3.3 The eligibility criteria for a CARS project requires that the town centre is covered by a conservation area. The bid was submitted on the basis of townscape analysis that evidences Helensburgh's town centre as being an area of special character and historic interest, with a number of buildings in need of substantial upgrading. If funding were to be secured for a CARS scheme, the project would be expected to contribute to the economic and social wellbeing of the town centre by supporting private owners to make repairs to historic buildings, particularly those in substantial need of repair. The decision has been deferred by HES to allow for a conservation area to be further explored and potentially implemented.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 It is recommended that Members of the Helensburgh and Lomond Area Committee:
- a) Endorse a six-week consultation period on the potential for a Helensburgh Town Centre Conservation Area designation; and
 - b) Note that consideration of the Helensburgh Town Centre application for CARS funding has been deferred until early 2020 and relies upon a town centre conservation area having been designated.

5.0 DETAIL

- 5.1 Conservation areas are designated under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997. Conservation areas are designated with a view to preserving and enhancing areas of significant townscape character. Only areas which can therefore demonstrate special architectural or historic interest become conservation areas.
- 5.2 It is envisaged that a conservation area would help to better protect buildings within Helensburgh's town centre. Conservation areas also increase the opportunity for heritage to be a driver for regeneration. The town centre conservation areas of Rothesay, Campbeltown, Inveraray, Lochgilphead and Dunoon have all benefited from heritage-led regeneration funding. The total Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme funding secured for these towns is £5,041,481, and which to date has attracted a further £8m+ in additional investment.
- 5.3 Professional analysis has been undertaken to initially scope out whether there is merit in designating a small part of Helensburgh's town centre as a conservation area. The analysis determined that Helensburgh is distinctive in character and there is indeed merit for further consideration of a small focused part of Helensburgh that includes a significant number of listed buildings. A report prepared by ZM Architecture to support consultation activity is attached as Appendix 1. The key areas of special interest highlighted in the report are summarised as follows:
- Density, and pattern of urban form.
 - Townscape based on tenement and terrace in contrast to the garden wall and hedge row of Upper Helensburgh.
 - Townscape further shaped by a diverse range of historic buildings and architectural styles, in particular 20 Listed Buildings located in the town centre, together with many un-listed buildings that make a significant contribution to the townscape.
 - Commercial trading at ground floor. While a number of traditional shopfronts have been lost there are still a number of remaining Victorian frontages with substantive period detailing.
 - Town centre linkage to waterfront, and expansive panoramas of Greenock and Port Glasgow.
 - Opportunities to enhance through conservation area control, by addressing specific negative impacts and considering development opportunities.
- 5.4 A map of what is considered to be a logical boundary at this early stage is also incorporated within Appendix 1. The boundary is focussed around the commercial core, with Princes Street and Colquhoun Square at the centre. To the east the boundary would encompass Helensburgh Central Station and end at James Street to the west.
- 5.5 Consultation on a Helensburgh Town Centre Conservation Area would run for a six-week period, and ask the following questions:

- Would you be supportive of a conservation area that were to cover part of Helensburgh Town Centre?
 - Do you think the proposed Helensburgh Town Centre Conservation Area boundary is appropriately drawn?
- 5.6 Officers will meet with representatives from both Helensburgh Community Council and Helensburgh Chamber of Commerce to advise on the scope of the consultation on 30th April 2019.
- 5.7 It is best practice to consult on a proposed conservation area designation and it is hoped that the community see this favourably. The results from the consultation, and the rationale for a conservation area would be taken to PPSL as a next step towards designation.

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Initial scoping work has indicated that the designation of a Helensburgh Town Centre Conservation Area would serve to protect the town's distinctive character and special interest and that there is merit to warrant consultation with the community on the principle of such a designation.
- 6.2 A conservation area designation would also enable a currently deferred application to Historic Environment Scotland under their Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme programme to be fully considered in the early part of 2020 and which, if successful, would result in £2m of investment in historic built fabric in need of repair in Helensburgh's town centre over a five-year period.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Policy - The Outcome Improvement Plan and Local Development Plan support town centre regeneration and a diverse and thriving economy. The outcome from consultation activity would form part of the LDP review process.
- 7.2 Financial – A request for £1.5m has been made to Historic Environment Scotland for a Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme for Helensburgh. At the meeting of 21 February 2019, and as part of the budget setting process, Council agreed to a financial contribution to a potential Helensburgh CARS to the value of £500,000.
- 7.3 Legal - There is a statutory designation process to follow when seeking to designate a conservation area.
- 7.4 HR - None
- 7.5 Equalities / Fairer Scotland Duty - None

- 7.6 Risk – Should the council choose not to pursue a conservation area designation, the CARS application will not be considered by HES as the eligibility criteria will not have been met.
- 7.7 Customer Service – Consultation activity will attempt to engage in various different ways with a view to reaching as many people as possible.

Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure, Pippa Milne

Policy Lead, Sustainable Economic Growth, Councillor Aileen Morton

29 March 2019

For further information contact:

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APPENDICES

1. Proposal for Helensburgh Town Centre Conservation Area