

**HELENSBURGH TOWN CENTRE CONSERVATION AREA PROPOSAL**

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**1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to seek Member approval to progress the designation of a new conservation area to cover part of Helensburgh town centre.
- 1.2. Conservation areas are designated under the Planning Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas (Scotland) Act 1997. Local planning authorities should designate and review existing and potential conservation areas, and these should be supported by Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans. Planning authorities have a duty to submit their proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas for consideration to a local public meeting and should, when preparing schemes, seek the advice and views of local residents and amenity groups. In this case, a six-week consultation period was undertaken from 1<sup>st</sup> May to 12<sup>th</sup> June 2019, with a public drop in event held in Helensburgh on 13<sup>th</sup> May. The consultation attracted 59 responses. A further response on behalf of Helensburgh Community Council was received outwith the consultation period and is not therefore included in the analysis of the responses, as detailed within paragraph 4.10. The response does however reflect many of the other responses received. Helensburgh Community Council have subsequently confirmed that information provided in response to their letter has fully addressed the concerns they expressed and that they shall remain engaged.
- 1.3. To be designated a conservation area, an area must meet the criteria of 'special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance', as set out in Section 61 of the 1997 Act. Following professional analysis of the area (Appendix 1), a significant part of Helensburgh town centre is considered to meet this criteria. The majority of the responses received as a result of the consultation exercise are supportive of the idea of a

conservation area designation being pursued for the town centre and it is therefore recommended that the designation be progressed.

- 1.4. This report therefore recommends that PPSL agree to the proposal of a Helensburgh Town Centre Conservation Area and recommend to the Council that the necessary steps, as set out in Section 62 of the Act, be taken to designate a new Helensburgh Town Centre Conservation Area.
- 1.5. A boundary map, delineating the proposed conservation area is attached as Appendix 2. It is considered that the street pattern, the tenemental scale and density of the buildings with a commercial ground floor element create a distinct town centre character, and the boundary has been drawn to reflect this. There was interest from a number of respondents in expanding the boundary to incorporate some of the waterfront and esplanade area, as described in paragraphs 4.10 – 4.11. However as this open seafront area is considered to be quite different in character, scale and activity from that of the retail core of the town centre it is not proposed to redraw the boundary to incorporate this area.

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### 2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1. The purpose of this report is to seek Member approval to progress the designation of a new Helensburgh Town Centre Conservation Area.
- 2.2. The recommendation follows a six-week public consultation exercise, which asked for views on the possible establishment of a town centre conservation area for Helensburgh and which would encompass the principal area of the historic retail core of mixed uses with predominately tenemental ground floor retail with residential accommodation above.

### 3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that Members agree:
  - i) To the proposed Helensburgh Town Centre Conservation Area, and:
  - ii) That this and the proposed boundary, as per Appendix 2, be taken forward to Council for designation.

### 4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1. A conservation area can be described by its character and seeks to protect the buildings and the spaces between them that are of architectural or historic interest. Its purpose is to ensure that any development or alteration positively contributes to the area's character.
- 4.2. The definition of a conservation area is contained within Section 61 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 as, "an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance". The Act makes provision for the designation of conservation areas, and planning authorities are required to determine which parts

of their locale merit conservation area status and it is on the basis of this section of the Act that a review of Helensburgh town centre was made. It should be noted that Helensburgh already has two distinct conservation areas that predominately cover residential areas of the town.

- 4.3. The purpose of the recent review in Helensburgh was also to explore access to heritage-led regeneration funding such as that obtained for Campbeltown, Dunoon and Rothesay through Historic Environment Scotland's Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) fund.
- 4.4. The quality of townscape and buildings, density and street pattern, and crucially the activity and use of the proposed conservation area are considered to demonstrate sufficient special character, which can be described as being built around the historic town centre retail core.
- 4.5. Should a Helensburgh Town Centre Conservation Area be designated, a currently deferred bid for CARS funding could be considered in the first quarter of 2020, as the designation would make the area eligible for the heritage-led regeneration funding. It is intended for Economic Development officers to pursue this funding in this case.
- 4.6. Consultation on the potential for a Helensburgh Town Centre Conservation Area took place between 1<sup>st</sup> May and 12<sup>th</sup> June 2019, with a drop-in event hosted on 13<sup>th</sup> May.
- 4.7. Consultation was based upon conservation accredited professional analysis (Appendix 1) which concluded that there is sufficient merit within the town centre retail core which is primarily focused on the shops and tenemental properties above to warrant conservation area designation. The proposed boundary (Appendix 2) is based on this analysis and reflects the retail character. The area also incorporates a significant number of listed buildings, by virtue of which the quality of architecture is highlighted.
- 4.8. Consultees were invited to comment on whether they would support a conservation area designation and for their thoughts on the proposed boundary. The consultation was advertised in advance of, and throughout the consultation period via social media and posters within public buildings. In addition, regular emails were sent to local amenity groups to ask that their members be reminded to take part in the consultation. Flyers were distributed by hand to all independent businesses within the affected area at ground floor level, inviting business owners to a drop-in event. In addition, a face to face meeting was held with members of both the community council and the chamber of commerce in advance of the consultation period to outline

proposals. A follow up meeting took place between a chamber representative and a planning officer to detail the practical impact of such a designation. No formal response was subsequently received from Helensburgh Chamber of Commerce, and a response from Helensburgh Community Council was received outwith the formal consultation period. The feedback does however align with many of the other responses received as follows. Helensburgh Community Council have subsequently confirmed that information provided in response to their letter has fully addressed the concerns they expressed and that they shall remain engaged.

- 4.9. A total of 59 responses were received during the consultation period. Of these, 38 (64%) were in favour of a conservation area designation and 34 suggested that the proposed boundary be redrawn, with 21 of the 34 making specific suggested amendments. The following provides a further breakdown of the consultation analysis:
- 13 people suggested that the boundary be extended to include the pier;
  - 3 people suggested that the boundary be extended to include the waterfront area, which is understood to be the swimming pool area;
  - 2 people suggested that the boundary be extended to include more of the seafront.
  - There were also 3 single requests to increase the area to the north and to remove the train station, and a car park.
  - Concerns cited the lack of maintenance within the town centre (7 responses), the need for careful management of a conservation area (5 responses), and perceived increased planning restrictions as a consequence of a conservation area designation (9 responses).
  - Of the 59 respondents only 11 people would be affected by the conservation area designation, and of those directly affected, 7 are in favour of the designation.
- 4.10. Careful consideration was given to all suggested amendments, and the boundary has been redrawn to remove the car park on Maitland Street as it is agreed that this area does not fit with the retail character. However, as the character of the waterfront is quite different to that of the shopping area, especially in terms of density and use, and by virtue of the pier now being a listed building and therefore afforded protection in its own right, it is considered that the boundary should not be redrawn so that the focus can be on attracting funding for the conservation regeneration activities. In this regard the waterfront and

esplanade have already benefited from environmental improvements associated with CHORD, and will benefit from the planned investment and regeneration associated with the waterfront and replacement swimming pool project.

- 4.11. As the consultation consequently demonstrates a high level of support for a Conservation area designation this report requests that the decision to designate a Helensburgh Town Centre Conservation Area be made by the Council, with a supporting recommendation from PPSL. Further to this, and as set out in Section 62 of the 1997 Act, once a planning authority has taken the decision to designate a conservation area, notice of the designation must be published in the *Edinburgh Gazette* and at least one local newspaper. At this point, formal notification of the designation must simultaneously be provided to Historic Environment Scotland and Scottish Ministers, providing them with a copy of the published notice, together with a copy of the designation map and a list of street names submitted in an open GIS format.
- 4.12. On conclusion of the designation process, Economic Development officers will alert colleagues within the grants team at Historic Environment Scotland (HES) that a conservation area is in place. All criteria will therefore have been met to satisfy HES that a decision can be taken on a Round 8 bid to their Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) for Helensburgh Town Centre CARS funding, which would support the regeneration activity within a designated section of the conservation area. A Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan will also be prepared to support the bid for CARS funding, and to help inform property owners and residents of the qualities of the conservation area and the ways in which these can be maintained and enhanced going forward. The appraisal and management plan will be subject to further public consultation and engagement, and the finalised appraisal and management plan will be reported to PPSL.

## **5.0 CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 Conservation Areas are designated under the Planning, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas (Scotland) Act 1997. Local planning authorities should designate and review existing and potential conservation areas, and these should be supported by Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans. Should a conservation area be designated, the preparation of an appraisal and management plan would be subsequently produced.

- 5.2 Further to a conservation accredited professional consideration of Helensburgh's town centre, it is considered that the central retail core merits conservation area designation. Public consultation on the proposals for a conservation area ran from 1<sup>st</sup> May to 12<sup>th</sup> June 2019, resulting in 38 of 59 respondents in favour of such a designation.
- 5.3 This report therefore recommends that members agree that the proposal to designate a conservation area to cover part of Helensburgh's town centre would serve to preserve or enhance the special architectural or historic interest of the area and should be progressed accordingly, which would subsequently allow for an application submitted to Historic Environment Scotland for a Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme to be considered.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Policy - Sections 61 - 63 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 would provide the statutory basis for a conservation area designation.
- 6.2 Financial – The cost of preparing a Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan would be met using existing budgets
- 6.3 Legal - None
- 6.4 HR - None
- 6.5 Fairer Scotland Duty - None
- 6.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics - None
- 6.5.2 Socio-economic Duty - None
- 6.5.3 Islands - N/A
- 6.6. Risk - If the proposed conservation area is not designated, Historic Environment Scotland will be unable to consider an application for Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) funding for Helensburgh.
- 6.7 Customer Service - None

**Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth,  
Pippa Milne**

**Policy Lead for Planning and Regulatory Services, David Kinniburgh**

9<sup>th</sup> August 2019

### **For further information contact:**

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## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – Consultation Document

Appendix 2 – Proposed conservation area boundary