

**COMMUNITIES, HOMES & REGENERATION
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

WEDNESDAY, 5 APRIL 2023

4. CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISALS

The Committee considered a report on appraisals undertaken on the following 10 conservations areas within Carmarthenshire and the proposed amendments to their boundaries, where applicable. The report detailed the outcome of the consultation exercise undertaken between the 24th June and 26th August 2022, and outlined the next steps and future stages towards the adoption of the appraisals and their outcomes. It was also noted the appraisals had been undertaken in accordance with the Council's legal duties under the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990:

- Carmarthen Town,
- Priory Street, Carmarthen
- Lammas Street, Carmarthen
- Picton Terrace, Carmarthen
- Laugharne,
- St Clears,
- Kidwelly,
- Llanelli,
- Llandeilo
- Newcastle Emlyn.

The following questions/issues were raised on the report:-

- Reference was made to the 27 Conservation Areas within Carmarthenshire, many of which had not been reviewed since their creation, some as long ago as the 1970's. It was confirmed the lack of any subsequent reviews had been recognised, hence the undertaking of the above 10 appraisals. Whilst the delay in the reviews was part attributed to a resourcing issue, it was noted that as staffing levels within the unit were now up to full complement, appraisals of the remaining 17 areas would be undertaken in-house as part of the Unit's future work programme.
- Reference was made to the elements within the report relating to excessive street furniture within some of the conservation areas, for example in Llanelli, and clarification sought on whether they would be removed retrospectively following the report's adoption. It was noted that whilst the conservation areas had not been reviewed for a significant period, any consideration on the removal of street furniture would need to be undertaken as part of an examination of the public realm as a whole and being seen as an opportunity on how best to preserve and enhance the street scene while having regard to its conservation. That could include, for example, regeneration proposals and developing a blueprint for street furniture and tree planting.

- A point was raised regarding the appraisal consultations and how residents would be advised their properties were situated within a conservation area.

The Committee was advised that extensive consultations had been undertaken with the public on the appraisals which included holding events, online webinars, pre-consultation questionnaire and via the 'Have your say' portal on the Council's website. With regard to engaging with the public following the report's adoption the Head of Place and Infrastructure advised the department could look at how that could best be achieved, for example holding workshops.

- Reference was made to existing provisions preventing the erection of solar dishes on the front of properties within conservation areas, Clarification was sought on whether the same criteria would be applied on the installation of solar panels to reduce carbon emissions and help achieve net zero carbon.

The Senior Built Heritage Officer advised there were planning policies in place in relation to solar panels from the Welsh Government Guidance, and specific advice was also included on the Council's Planning Portal. Should homeowners within a conservation area wish to erect solar panels on their home, they would need to apply for planning consent and each application would be considered on its own merit having regard to planning policies and any potential impact the development may have on the character of the area. Additionally, while solar panel installation was one avenue available to homeowners to achieving carbon reductions, there were other options available which the department could advise upon e.g. insulation or new windows, with each building having to be assessed individually on which package of measures would best achieve that reduction. It was also confirmed that if solar panels had been installed on a property prior to its inclusion within a revised conservation boundary their removal would not be required.

In response to the above, a comment was made on legislation relating to conservation areas and its conflict with the Welsh Government's target of achieving zero carbon emissions. It was felt the Committee should write to the Welsh Government in that regard requesting it give consideration on how it could best support both preserving and saving the environment.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED

- 4.1 that the Conservation Area Appraisals Report be approved.**
- 4.2 That a letter be sent from the Chair to the Welsh Government to highlight the challenges and contradictions between conservation areas and the climate emergency and that it considers how it can best support in both preserving and saving the environment.**