

The City Planning Officer presented the following Report:

CITY OF BIRMINGHAM

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

PLANNING AND HIGHWAYS COMMITTEE

19th July, 1979

SEE APPENDIX

Proposed Conservation Area: Lozells and Soho Hill.

The Lozells and Soho Hill area of the City contains a variety of buildings of individual architectural merit, and of group value. A number of buildings are included on the Statutory List of buildings of special architectural or historical interest - Soho House, St. Mary's Convent, Nos. 127-133 Soho Hill, and the recently listed properties of 29-41 Villa Road. The character of the area comprises the large properties around St. Michael's Church and Soho Hill, the late Georgian and Regency properties around Barker Street and Hunters Road, and the Victorian terraces, groves and squares in the east of the study area. The Victorian properties are of uniform design, but display variations in detailing of windows and door mouldings.

The area is the subject of an active Urban Renewal Programme and a large part is covered by Lozells Area Plan. Private individuals, Housing Associations and the Urban Renewal Team are involved in house improvements in the area.

Some unsympathetic alterations have been carried out in the area and this was drawn to the attention of the Conservation Areas Advisory Committee in June, 1977. Following a visit to the area in question, your Committee adopted a policy in relation to areas of older housing within the redevelopment and urban renewal programme, to ensure that attention is paid to the maintenance and restoration of the original character of buildings. The key to this policy was seen to be improved liaison and consultation at early stages.

The Victorian Society (Birmingham Group) report on "Conservation in Lozells" drew attention to the special character of the area, and recommended the declaration of a Conservation Area and the serving of an Article 4 Direction. A report was submitted to your Committee on the 14th September, 1978, explaining the Victorian Society's proposals, and an area defined by officers of the Planning Department which appeared to have conservation potential. It was resolved that:

1. Your Committee receive the report of the Victorian Society "Conservation in Lozells", and that the Victorian Society be informed that your Committee wish to place on record their appreciation for the work carried out in the preparation of that report.
2. That your Committee agree in principle to an area at Lozells being considered for designation as a Conservation Area, and possibly subject to an Article 4 Direction to restrict permitted development.

(ii)

3. That the City Planning Officer be instructed to prepare an exhibition of proposals for conservation in Lozells, and that residents within the area be invited to attend and forward their comments on these.

Following a detailed study of the Lozells area, including the area to the west incorporating Soho Hill, a public exhibition was prepared and displayed at The Bonner Memorial Hall, Hunters Road, Lozells, between Saturday January 27th, and Friday February 2nd, 1979. The exhibition displayed information on the history of Lozells, the character of the area, the Urban Renewal Programme and unsympathetic alterations, and concluded with an assessment of conservation potential and the quality of the area. Six options for the delineation of the conservation area were presented.

- a) No Conservation Area.
- b) The Core Area around Barker Street and Hunters Road.
- c) An area modelled on the City's proposals.
- d) An area modelled on the Victoria Society's proposals.
- e) The Study Area excluding the Soho Hill Area.
- f) The Whole of the Study Area.

Visitors were encouraged to complete a questionnaire of their reactions to the exhibition.

178 visitors attended the exhibition, of these 44 completed a questionnaire. A tabulation of the questionnaire is provided in Appendix 1, but in summary it is apparent that :-

1. 40 (out of 44) supported the designation of the Conservation Area.
2. 23 (out of 44) favoured Option (F), the whole of the Study Area, as the favoured delineation of the Conservation Area.

A public meeting was held on March 20th, 1979, chaired by Councillor Orchard and attended by Councillor Evans, with representatives of the Planning Department and Urban Renewal Project Team. Although poorly attended, public reaction was strongly in favour of the designation of a Conservation Area delineated by Option (F). Minor amendments to this boundary were made following public reaction to provide for the inclusion of the Carnegie Infant Welfare Institute in Hunters Road. Public reaction also supported an Article 4 Direction within this area.

Lozells and Soho Hill is an interesting area within the City, containing a variety of properties of individual architectural merit and of group value, giving the area an overall character which should be retained and enhanced. Conservation Area status would confirm the historical and architectural significance of the area, and thus add impetus to the existing policy of informal liaison and consultation. However, the area most favoured by members of the public and amenity bodies covers an extremely large area which would be difficult to deal with effectively under current conservation legislation. The proposed area also extends beyond the area which might be considered the most significant core area. I suggest, therefore, that a more restricted Conservation Area, based upon the areas identified as of greatest value, be designated and that a simple guidance note on the design and improvement of property should be prepared which would minimise unsympathetic alterations in both the designated Conservation Area and undesignated parts of Lozells.

The imposition of an Article 4 Direction would provide additional control over further unsympathetic alterations in the area by restricting the rights of permitted development. It should, of course, be borne in mind that an Article 4 Direction can only control permitted development and some minor alterations - which also affect the character of individual properties - may not constitute development. The boundaries of an Article 4 Direction need not correspond with the boundary of the proposed Conservation Area and should be restricted in use to only those areas and classes of development where a major problem exists

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- I. That your Committee designate a Conservation Area under Section 277 of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1971, the area delineated on the plan.
- II. That your Committee agree in principle to an Article 4 Direction in the Lozells Area, subject to further detailed discussions with the interested parties regarding the delineation of the Article 4 Direction and the classes of permitted development to be controlled.
- III. That a guidance note be prepared on the design extensions and alteration within the Lozells and Soho Hill areas.

HC/GHP

Graham Shaylor
CITY PLANNING OFFICER

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