

Work of the Conservation Service

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Purpose of the Report

To summarise the role and review the work of the Conservation Team of the Development Management Service.

Public Interest

The Conservation Team is part of the Development Management Service and provides specialist advice on the built and natural environment to the Council as a whole but particularly to planning, to members of the public, agents and developers and Town and Parish Councils.

Recommendation

That Members note the report.

Report

The work of the Conservation team is wide ranging across issues relating to the built and natural environment of the District. South Somerset is an area of fine, varied landscapes and attractive towns and villages and the team sees its role as helping to care for these important assets and deliver well-designed and sensitive new developments.

The team consists of:-

Landscape Architect	– Robert Archer (4/5fte)
Tree Officer	– Phil Poulton
Ecologist	– Terry Franklin (0.5fte)
2 Conservation Officers	– Andrew Tucker and Greg Venn
Team manager/Conservation Architect	– Adron Duckworth (3/5fte)

Landscape Architect

- Provides advice on planning applications and pre-apps on the landscape impact of development proposals and those affecting AONBs and Historic landscapes, Parks and Gardens - 460 consultations 2014
- Landscape and architectural design advice in relation to historic areas and the wider landscape
- Negotiation of mitigation measures for applications eg major schemes such as PV Arrays
- Input to masterplanning of major development sites and production of design codes
- Input to Spatial Policy work/ Local Plan on strategic landscape capacity

Tree Officer

- Advises on trees in relation to development proposals - 182 consultations 2014

- Enforcement casework involving tree works
- Negotiates proposals affecting TPO and Conservation Area trees - 387 applications 2014
- Makes TPOs, 18 new TPOs this year
- Deals with Hedgerow Removal Notices (10 in 2014) and High Hedge disputes,
- Gives support for the Parish tree wardens
- Implements amenity tree planting schemes -1800 trees planted last season.

Ecologist

- All planning applications are screened for impact upon designated sites and protected species through the Bioplan Agreement with Somerset Environmental Record Centre and monitored by the ecologist. Where a potential impact is identified the ecologist advises and negotiates on appropriate mitigation measures - 337 applications 2014

Conservation Officers

- Building conservation advice on applications on listed buildings and in conservation areas and negotiations over proposals - 395 consultations 2014
- Providing pre-app advice, advice to potential purchasers - 361 pre-apps 2014
- Giving technical conservation advice
- Listed buildings at risk casework
- Enforcement casework
- Conservation Area reviews, appraisals and new designations
- Input to regeneration schemes

Team Manager/Conservation Architect

- Team management
- Input to work of Conservation Officers as above
- Architectural and urban design advice and negotiation over one-off buildings, residential developments etc and advice on planning applications.
- Technical conservation advice and specifications
- Input to masterplanning of major development sites and production of design codes
- Input to Spatial Policy/ Local Plan

The team provides a considerable amount of pre-application advice in all its roles and this is regarded as a particularly effective way of assisting applicants to produce good proposals and reducing the number of application refusals.

The team works in partnership with other services where appropriate, to help provide an integrated approach to finding solutions:-

Spatial Policy – Conservation policies, landscape capacity studies, Heritage Strategy

Building Control – Works to listed buildings, dangerous buildings

Legal team – Statutory notices

Land Charges - Mapping listed building curtilages to help with searches

Environmental Health - Reuse of empty properties

Area Development – Regeneration and enhancement projects such as Langport Town Centre, Prince's St. Yeovil

Work of the team over the past year

Particular activities over and above the usual run of consultations include:

- Substantial input to the Local Plan Enquiry over landscape and historic environment impacts of Directions of Growth.

- Input to masterplanning of Yeovil urban extensions at Primrose Lane and Keyford.
- Preparation of initial draft of Heritage Strategy.
- Conservation Area Review and Appraisal completed for Langport, Huish Episcopi. And Charlton Mackrell/West Charlton conservation areas.
- Mapped listed curtilages for 60 Parishes.
- Provided in-depth working experience for the two planning/conservation interns
- Promoted the listing of unlisted village war memorials in partnership with English Heritage (now Historic England). 24 new listings added.
- Provided a specification for stone repairs to Preston Plucknett War Memorial.
- With grant aid from English Heritage (now Historic England) commissioned a condition survey, historical analysis and options appraisal for 'at risk' Grade 1 listed 7-11 Fore St. Chard.
- Worked towards resolving other buildings at risk.

Some Statistics			
	2013	2014	2015 (*to 31.7.15)
Consultations			
Landscape Architect	408	460	289*
Tree Officer	171	182	107*
Ecologist	257	337	223*
Conservation Officer AT	191	196	147*
Conservation Officer GV	159	199	126*
Team manager	72	58	41*
Listed building Consent Applications			
East	66	107	70*
North	73	96	60*
South	32	24	21*
West	93	95	55*
Building Conservation Pre-Apps			
Conservation Officer AT (East & South)	150	162	89*
Conservation Officer GV (North & West)	209	199	65*
Tree Applications			
TPO (works to TPO trees)	61	72	46*
TCA (works to trees in CA)	272	315	132*
HDG (hedgerow removal)	4	10	2*

Forward Work Plan includes

- Work in the Local Development Scheme for Spatial Policy: Landscape and Heritage Strategies, detailed site assessments
- Continue to provide advice to consultees within expected time constraints
- Complete mapping listed building curtilages for Land Charges
- Work towards resolving long-standing listed buildings at risk cases.
- Continue Conservation Area review and appraisal programme. See Annex to this report.

Financial Implications

None above the budgeted cost of the service

Corporate Priority Implications

Focus 2 – Enhance the Environment

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

No adverse implications

Equality and Diversity Implications

No implications indicated

Background Papers

None
