

# Brighton & Hove City Council

## Culture, Heritage, Sport, Tourism & Economic Development Committee

## Agenda Item 46

**Subject:** College Conservation Area Character Statement

**Date of meeting:** 18 January 2024

**Report of:** Director of Economy, Environment and Culture

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**Wards affected:** Queens Park

For general release

### 1. Purpose of the report and policy context

1.1 This report summarises the response to public consultation on the draft College Conservation Area Character Statement and seeks approval to publish the final document subject to any minor grammatical / editorial alterations and any further illustrations that may be agreed by the Executive Director Economy, Environment and Culture.

1.2 The Character Statement seeks to define the 'special architectural or historic interest' of the area and it will help to inform future planning proposals and decisions in the area. It will form a sound basis for the area's future management. This is consistent with the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act), the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), City Plan Part One and Part Two and the council's Conservation Strategy (2015), as set out further below.

### 2. Recommendations

2.1 That Committee agrees publication of the College Conservation Area Character Statement (Appendix 1).

### 3. Context and background information

3.1 The College Conservation Area is centered around the buildings and grounds of Brighton College, a school first built in the mid-nineteenth century, and comprises the original school building at the center of the site with later nineteenth century and early residential development around the school and other later buildings added to the school up until the present day. The most historically significant of these buildings are the early gothic buildings, designed by George Gilbert Scott, these are all listed buildings.

- 3.2 The Conservation Area was designated on 28 April 1988. It is the only conservation area in the city without a conservation area character statement. The statement is intended to provide both an account of the College Conservation Area and a clear indication of the council's approach to its preservation and enhancement. It should offer guidance for all those involved in development and change in the conservation area and will be used by the Council in assessing the design of development in future planning proposals.
- 3.3 The Act states (s71) that an LPA should from time to time formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of a conservation area. The Act is silent on the form of these proposals. Whilst there is no statutory requirement to prepare such proposals in the form of conservation area character statements, local authorities are encouraged to do so by the NPPF to identify and assess an area's significance.
- 3.4 A good understanding of what makes a conservation area special is key to its continued conservation; it gives justification and credence to the designation. An up-to-date character statement is important for making robust and enforceable planning decisions and is a material consideration in determining a planning application and in the event of an appeal.

#### **4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options**

- 4.1 College Conservation Area is the only conservation area in Brighton and Hove with no form of character statement. It is good practice to prepare character statements both to assist decision making by local planning authorities and to assist a better understanding of the issues affecting development in the area by everyone.

#### **5. Community engagement and consultation**

- 5.1 A formal consultation on the draft Character Statement was undertaken for 5 weeks from 13 October 2023 to 17 November 2023. This included advertising the consultation on the council website and inviting responses; emailing all contacts registered on the planning policy database including all local amenity and conservation groups; inviting responses from statutory consultees such as Historic England; emailing all councillors; issuing a press release and the posting of site notices in the local area itself.
- 5.2 75 responses were received in total which is considered a very good response for this type of consultation. A significant number of responses came from local residents (59). Some residents felt the consultation should have included letters or flyers to all homes within the local area. The consultation was considered appropriate and proportionate for the nature and purposes of the document. A summary of responses received and how these have been addressed in the final document is included in Appendix 2.
- 5.3 The key issues raised by local resident were as follows:

a) some local residents were concerned the statement would favour Brighton College in terms of the further development of education buildings within the conservation area and would assist the college to purchase further residential buildings and convert them for college use. The Character Statement cannot encourage or prevent the purchase of properties by any organization. Its purpose is to examine the existing historic and architectural character of the conservation area.

b) concerns were also raised regarding anti-social parking; traffic congestion and coach parking associated with the operation of the school and also related to recent construction projects by the college. These comments are not directly relevant to the character statement. Officers have however informed the BHCC parking strategy team of parking concerns and that team are in liaison with the college to help address these matters. The character statement can help inform future development proposals within the conservation area. It cannot address site works or construction issues all of which are addressed through the normal development management planning processes.

c) some residents were in favour of reducing the size of the conservation area while others supported an expansion of it. The document recognises the significance of both the college buildings and the residential areas currently included and there are no plans to amend the boundaries.

5.4 The Conservation Advisory Group (CAG) helpfully suggested that the statement could include a section on street furniture especially to recognize the importance of the nineteenth century lampposts. The document has been amended to include the most prominent street furniture in the conservation area.

5.5 Other consultee responses e.g., Historic England, local residents and councillors asked for additional photos to be included; improvements to be made to the layout of the statement, the map of the conservation area and for further clarification of some of the language used in the statement. Amendments have been made to address these responses. Typographic and spelling errors in the statement have also been corrected.

## **6. Conclusion**

6.1 The College Conservation Area Character Statement provides an important account of the special architectural and historic interest of the conservation area and will assist in the protection and management of the area. The value of such statements is recognized in legislation and through national and local planning policy. This document will help inform future proposals for development in the conservation area and assist the decision-making process with the aim of protecting and enhancing the conservation area.

6.2 The boundaries of the conservation area were not reviewed as part of this work and no changes to the boundaries are recommended.

## **7. Financial implications**

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

Name of finance officer consulted: John Lack    Date consulted: 11/12/2023.

## **8. Legal implications**

- 8.1 There is a duty placed on the Council as local planning authority to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their administrative area which are conservation areas. Such duty is fulfilled for the College Conservation Area by virtue of this proposed Character Statement. The Council has publicized its proposals and sought views and input; these have been considered as set out in Appendix 2 to this report.

Name of lawyer consulted: Katie Kam            Date consulted 11/12/2023

## **9. Equalities implications**

- 9.1 The Conservation Area Character Statement will support the application of policy DM 26 Conservation Areas in the adopted City Plan Part Two. A Health and Equalities Impact Assessment (HEQIA) was carried out on the City Plan Part 2 as part of its preparation.

## **10. Sustainability implications**

- 10.1 An active approach to conserving and enhancing the conservation area contributes to retaining embodied energy. Some restrictions on uPVC windows do apply within the conservation area but only to the front elevation of the houses in the conservation area and double glazing is permitted on the rear elevations. These requirements apply to all conservation areas and the drafting of this Conservation Area Character Statement does not alter these constraints. Other guidance is available on the council website regarding improving energy efficiency within historic buildings.

## **Supporting Documentation**

### **1. Appendices**

Appendix 1: The College Conservation Area Character Statement

Appendix 2: Summary of Consultation Responses