



Big Conservation Conversation workshop notes

Some stats:

- 75% of attendees had never met a representative of Historic England before the meeting
- 50% had never met a Leeds City Council conservation officer before the meeting.
- 1/3rd of the group were involved in preparing a neighbourhood plan
- 50% of the group lived in a conservation area
- There are 78 conservation areas in Leeds, with 62% having an updated management plan

The clear majority of people attending were there to network with others from across Leeds, meet representatives from Leeds Civic Trust, and hear updates about how the 50th anniversary of conservation areas was being celebrated across England.

Presentations were provided by Leeds City Council, Historic England and Civic Voice before the group were split up into groups of 5-6 individuals. Each group was asked to select the 3 greatest risks they felt were the main issues facing their local conservation areas.

To ensure that the group didn't become fixed on individual problems, each group was chaired by a representative from Leeds Civic Trust, Historic England and Leeds City Council to help bring a wider perspective to the discussion.

1, What are the main issues/challenges facing the future of local conservation areas?

Issue	Number of groups to select
Permitted development changes*	4
Lack of appropriate enforcement	3
Decision makers not understanding the benefit of c/a	3
Threat to open space – garden grabbing/green spaces	3
Building Owners their role in managing a conservation area	3
Empty buildings	2
Transient student population	1
Piecemeal/everyday changes	1
Non-lived in conservation areas (industrial areas)	1

**The Town and County Planning Order 2015 (General Permitted Development) allows certain minor development to take place without specific consent*

2, What are you planning on doing for Civic Day to celebration your local conservation area to tackle the issues address in point 1?

The group were given a presentation on activities civic societies across England were doing to celebrate 50 years of conservation areas.

1. Ensure local appraisals are undertaking on the issues facing the local area
2. Raise awareness via different methods that people live in a conservation area
3. Develop a neighbourhood plan that creates policies to address the issues at hand
4. Ensure that decision makers know that under the NPPF conservation areas are designated heritage assets and their conservation is to be given weight in planning permission decisions

Each group was then asked to consider how they could help conserve the appropriate conservation areas.

3, Each group had 3 minutes to answer, “How can you support Leeds City Council in conserving/protecting the 78 conservation areas across Leeds?”

1. We can give them our contact details so they know we exist to be the eyes/ears on the ground and let them know about the local issues in conservation areas
2. We can recognise that the authority is under resource constraints so we need to be nice to them.
3. Have a dialogue on what we are up to. Keep a relationship going by email, telephone and newsletter updates. We can simply ensure the appropriate people get our updates by email.
4. We should be commenting on planning applications impacting our local conservation area and perhaps copy these to Leeds Civic Trust so they can see the issues city wide.

4, Each group had 3 minutes to answer, “How can you support Historic England in conserving/protecting the 78 conservation areas across Leeds?”

1. We can give them our contact details so they know we exist to be the eyes/ears on the ground
2. We can be the eyes and ears on the ground and let them know about the local issues in conservation areas
3. Have a dialogue on what we are up to. Keep a relationship going by email, telephone and newsletter updates. We can simply ensure the appropriate people get our updates by email.
4. We should be commenting on planning applications impacting our local conservation area.

5, Each group had 60 seconds to answer, “How can Leeds Civic Trust support individual groups to address challenges they are facing?”

1. Offer training / methods on how groups can recruit new members
2. Strengthen coordination between all groups represented in the room all have contact details for each other so people can get in touch at later dates
3. Lend support to individual groups on planning applications / including training and for each group to lend support to others.
4. Create a network /communication tool so that groups know who/what/when is replying to different planning applications across the city to avoid duplication of effort / create better more informed responses
5. Create more information / better information sharing between the groups

Final closing remarks

A short discussion followed and Civic Voice were tasked in delivering similar ambitions and messages on a national level.

Groups were then asked to put forward ideas for walks around local conservation areas for Heritage Open Days and Civic Day.

Martin Hamilton explained that he wanted the group to go away with a sense of urgency so that when the affiliated groups meet again in the Autumn, they could talk about results. He acknowledged that some groups were challenging Leeds Civic Trust to do more to support the local groups and that this would be considered internally how best to make this happen. He finished by urging everyone to take action to get involved in the Big Conservation Conversation whether for Civic Day, Heritage Open Days or throughout the year.