



Case study

Peterborough Local List

Peterborough Civic Society and Peterborough City Council are working together to prepare a revised list of Buildings of Local Importance (BLI) for the district.

In addition to Peterborough's 400 or so statutorily listed Buildings of Architectural or Historic Interest, at present 15 buildings ineligible for listing but of importance locally receive a measure of protection from a policy in the 2005 Local Plan. They include the Town Hall (1929), Kings School (1885) and the former courthouse (1873). The policy, CBE11, states that demolition or substantial alteration of these buildings will only be permitted under special circumstances. A similar policy is expected to be included in the forthcoming Development Control Policies document, successor to the Local Plan. Both the Council and the Civic Society felt that the BLI list needed to be reviewed.

For the Civic Society, the issue came to the fore when it sought to secure the listing of the threatened Great Northern Hotel opposite Peterborough railway station. In declining to list the 1852 building, English Heritage's advisor raised the fact that the building had not been identified as being of local importance in Policy CBE11. Whilst there is no evidence to say that such inclusion would have influenced the decision to list, it was clearly important that all buildings that the people of Peterborough cared strongly about should be considered for as much protection as the Local Development Documents could provide.

Peterborough has both an urban and a rural component. The Council agreed to support a review of the BLI list and conservation officer Jim Daley obtained the committee's approval to a set of criteria for inclusion. They were in the form of a series of short question under each of the following headings: age and rarity, historic interest, architectural interest, and small structures (boundary stones etc). The Civic Society would tackle the urban area and the Parish Councils have been invited to review their rural areas. The Civic Society then identified 7 of its members to act as surveyors of the urban area. They received a briefing from the conservation officer, copies of relevant maps, a schedule of buildings already listed and letters of authority. They then surveyed their area and photographed and described potential candidate buildings.

The next step will be for the surveyors work to be assessed by the conservation officer, inconsistencies ironed out and a new BLI list to be incorporated into the draft development control policies document.

Why is the Civic Society participating? Partly because the project is an example of a labour intensive piece of work to which the Council is likely to give low priority without assistance. Also it is a task which Civic Society members care about and are well able to carry out. Members include architects, semi-retired planners and a building conservation professional as well as lay people well able to grasp the brief.

Are there any lessons to be learned? A bit early to say, but the project is a positive one which demonstrates that the Society is keen to assist the authority when it can rather than being branded a predictable and negative voice in the city.



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Is it worthwhile? Clearly a list of buildings of local importance will not carry the statutory weight of a formal listing, Article 4 direction or inclusion in a Conservation Area. But there are whole classes of building which merit care in deciding their future. And there is evidence that such lists give some confidence to planning officers and councils to take a firmer line than they might otherwise. On occasion they can influence the outcome of planning appeals when reinforced by the appropriate policy wording.

First step: establish a relationship of mutual respect with your local conservation officer and your Heritage Champion!

Peter Lee
Chairman- Peterborough Civic Society
Tel: 01780 782703