

Balsall Heath Conservation Area Background Information

- 1.1 Since the 2017 review, an area of Balsall Heath known as the “Moseley Road Corridor” is being considered for the adoption of a new conservation area. The “Area of Search” within this corridor runs from the Junction of Haden Way and the Moseley Road in the North to the Junction of Park Road and Alcester Road in the South. This corridor includes 7 listed and locally listed buildings as well many non-listed buildings which are considered to be of architectural merit. Important listed buildings of note along the route are the grade 2 listed Moseley Road Baths, which is one of the only examples of its kind in Europe and as such it is on Historic England’s “buildings at risk” register and the World Monument Fund Watch List. There is also the Library, the School of Art, the Moseley Dance Centre, the old tram station, and the residential properties at Brighton Place.
- 1.2 In regards to the Moseley Baths, there is currently a multi agency partnership “ (the Moseley Baths Coalition) in place including the CIO of the baths, the City Council as the landlord, the National Trust, the World Monument Fund, and Historic England, in order to secure a business model that will guarantee a sustainable future for the building. To date historic England have issued grants to repair the roof of the main “gala” pool, and the National Trust are leading on a bid for £10million of Heritage Lottery Funding to contribute towards developing the business model. However in order for the project to be full realised it is estimated that the full renovation and business offer of the baths will require circa £30 million, implying a current £20million gap in funding.
- 1.3 The setting of the baths and the surrounding townscape is also in much need of improvement. It is currently cluttered with signage, and shop frontages which are unsympathetic to the historic buildings in the wider area. There are a number of run down and vacant units which are falling into disrepair such as the former tram depot which is currently undergoing enforcement action, and a high number of dead frontages resulting from a significant number of A5 uses (takeaways) that reflect negatively on the heritage setting.
- 1.4 It is the opinion of the National Trust that the designation of a conservation area within Balsall Heath would lend stronger support to any bid focusing on regenerating the area and help to support the Moseley Baths Project being carried out by the Coalition partnership.

- 1.5 The designation of a conservation area, also signals confidence, and would help to attract public and private investment that could address the imbalance of uses in the existing street scene. This has the potential to create a niche shopping experience much like the successful examples of the Jewellery Quarter, which in turn, could offer regeneration opportunities for the area.
- 1.6 In order for a conservation area to be justified in principle, guidance from Historic England states that the area should meet the following three tests;
- It should have sufficient historical and architectural significance to be considered special
 - That this quality is shown in the character and appearance of the area
 - Whether it is desirable for the character and appearance to be preserved and enhanced.
- 1.7 It is the opinion of council officers that these tests are successfully met, and that a conservation area in Balsall Heath is acceptable in principle to support funding opportunities and the regeneration of the wider area.

2 **Outline Options considered and Recommended Proposal (See Appendix 2)**

- 2.1 **Option 1** – Do nothing. This option is not recommended as a potential to help regenerate the corridor and the street scene within it would be missed. It would also be a missed opportunity that would have improved the areas position in terms of bids for heritage funding and inward investment.
- 2.2 **Option 2** – This option focuses the Conservation Area in a small part of the Moseley Corridor. Its tight focus on the Moseley Baths, Library, and School of Art may make bids for heritage funding specifically for the Bath project stronger, however there are many other buildings along the Moseley Road corridor that contribute to the character and appearance of the area, and to not include them with the proposed boundary would be a missed opportunity to improve the overall setting of the corridor.
- 2.3 **Option 3** – This would incorporate part of the wider Moseley Road Corridor, and additional statutory listed and locally listed buildings such as the old tram depot. This option incorporates a number of buildings which, while not

statutorily or local listed, add a positive contribution to the setting and appearance of the corridor, and could help to influence the design of the public realm emerging from the Department for Transport of the West Midlands (TfTWM) Sprint Route proposals along the A435.

- 2.4 **Option 4** – This option is the same as option 3 but covers a wider area of the Moseley Road Corridor, and would additionally include the listed residential dwellings at Brighton Place. The only drawbacks to this option would be the potential of saturating the conservation area with a disproportionate amount of negative frontages, which could devalue the purpose of designating such an area as per the Historic England tests.
- 2.5 It is the recommendation of officers that the Council approve the principle of a Conservation Area within the Moseley Corridor at Balsall Heath, and to agree for planning officers to begin a soft consultation of Option 3, and, subject to receiving community support begin to develop a conservation area appraisal and management plan, that will be put to cabinet for approval at a later date.