

## **Consultation on Historic Environment Documentation 2017**

The Boston Heritage Strategy, Boston Town Centre Conservation Area Management Plan and Boston Shop Front Guide were made available on Boston Borough Council website and social media from 17<sup>th</sup> March for comment/consultation. Consultation was open until Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2017.

Members of the Viewpoint Panel, Youth Council, Heritage Forum, Elected members, All Managers, Boston Disability Forum, Boston Chamber of Commerce were all notified of that the documents were available for comment. Paper copies were made available if anyone required them.

## **Comments on the Boston Heritage Strategy**

- It looks fine
- Great to see a plan has been put in place. A successful town centre needs to look and feel pleasant and, it seems that lots of examples have embraced a more traditional approach in the way their town feels. Generally a nice environment attracts wealth and money which then obviously leads to further investment and a better town feel. A diverse selection of aesthetically pleasing buildings are a resource Boston has abundance which should definitely be emphasised and majored on. I am proud of the town's skyline, but am less fond of some of the distasteful signage and colourings chosen for some of the more budget and European shops.
- The strategy states, "Encourage a vibrant programme of cultural heritage and arts activities that appeal to a diverse audience". However, little or nothing is made of Boston's medieval heritage that will bring visitors to the town. In fact this year the Guildhall museum are not even having their usual medieval events which DO bring people to Boston from a wide area. Signposts are NOT going to bring in the tourists, and we need tourists as there is little else to come for. (unless you want to buy fake vodka polish food, illegal cigarettes or prescription medicines)
- No reference is made in the strategy to involving or working directly with schools, neglecting by far the most effective way to engage the community in this strategy. Not only would this enable the strategy to reach the families and friends of the children and staff but it would be guaranteeing that future generations understand and value their heritage. Historic England has started a Heritage Schools cluster in Boston (started in 2015) and a number of schools are actively engaging with their local heritage and working it into their curriculum. Boston High School is developing a Year 10 challenge week 'How can we improve the image of Boston?' and Heritage will form one of the 5 strands. I think this could be a very useful model for the town to adopt as a way to engage all the schools. Heritage Schools has also given £3K grant to Heritage Lincolnshire to work with the Guildhall, The Stump and 5 local schools to develop educational activities and resources on the Pilgrim Fathers and John Cotton. Having piloted the Heritage schools project in Great Yarmouth (a town you reference in your case studies) since 2012, I can vouch for the great value of having an effective Cultural education partnership in the town. If a way could be found to involve representatives of the schools with Boston Heritage Forum then a similarly effective collaboration could happen here too!

- Historic England warmly welcome the revised draft Heritage Strategy. It represents a significant advance on the previous draft. Its analysis of the past, present and future is sound and rigorous, and its scope comprehensive. We congratulate the parties involved on the aspirations contained in it. Whilst we have some comments on possible omissions, our interest is therefore mainly to ensure that the strategy is put into effect. Role of Boston Borough Council: It would be helpful if the strategy were explicit about the nature of BBC's role in the strategy. We appreciate that the strategy is in part a response to the financial pressures under which the council operates. Currently however, the council's 'voice' is largely absent from the strategy. References to it are largely retrospective or about what the council cannot do. A positive statement about how the Council sees its role going forward, and the functions, members and officers involved, would give comfort and encouragement to partners in the BHF. Link to Conservation Area Management Plan: By contrast the Boston Conservation Area Management Plan expresses some clear and very welcome commitments on the Council's part, particularly the Priorities and Objectives on p6 onwards. Explicit connections are made in the CA MP to the Strategy, but the connections are much less clear the other way. We suggest that the Strategy should summarise the Priorities and Objectives of the CA MP, to reduce the risk of Boston Heritage Forum members overlooking, and failing to engage in, the important ambitions set out in the CA MP. In particular it would be beneficial to reproduce Table 1 of the CA MP in the strategy, where appropriate identifying actions to which partners and the BHF can contribute. Context set by emerging Local Plan: The main reference to the Council's ongoing active role is in its capacity as decision-maker (p8). It would be helpful to explain how it will ensure that decisions are taken in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, for instance through an ongoing programme of Member training. It would furthermore be helpful to explain how the emerging Local Plan will (or should) support the Heritage Strategy, and in particular the policy context it will set for management of the historic environment. Wider policy context: More generally we suggest that analysis be made of the wider public policy context, and its current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats .
- Heritage is a valuable inherited social and economic asset. Every opportunity must be taken to enhance and add value to that heritage to local residents, visitors and tourist.

Tourism is key to economic success for Boston. Boston's important heritage is recognised nationally, but not sufficiently valued and promoted by local residents.

Heritage, Economy, Tourism, Customer requirements and preferences are all inextricably linked. All strategy's, policies and projects must clearly account for and satisfy those for elements.

Thus, a strategy plan is welcome, recognising the importance of our heritage, and building on that inheritance for the benefit of everyone.

The plan must be precise and achievable with some short term achievable goals, together with medium and long term objectives, all of which must be tightly monitored and delivered on time.

Heritage Strategy should be closely linked to Economic Strategy.

A detailed understanding of Boston's economic decline will, guide future strategies to success. Similarly, an understanding of historic economic success will guide the best use of our heritage to turn Boston into a popular tourist destination, thereby bringing economic regeneration to Boston based on that heritage.

Careful and tight control of architectural development and economic uses of all buildings should enhance the quality of the built environment and business profitability.

All maintenance and development must satisfy the visitors experience and local well-being. It is essential that local business and Chamber of Commerce understand the value of our heritage and the benefits of using the heritage to their economic advantage. Chamber of Commerce appears to be falling short of active involvement and support by members at present. Support by business is in their own best interest and vital to the success of the town.

Town centre must be user-friendly to local and tourists, its being the natural central hub of all major activity, alongside Boston Stump. Wednesday and Saturday Markets are nationally well-known assets and must be encouraged in every way.

The town centre needs to have an increased footfall. Out of town retail development with free car parking is in direct competition with the town centre. The availability of controlled free parking in some central car park is an essential ingredient of increasing footfall. Additionally, we need to encourage everyone to stay longer (and spend more money) in our shops, whilst also absorbing our distinctive heritage. User-friendly car parking facilities are the key component.

Too many people are keen to degrade Boston, national media included. Positive promotion of our amazing heritage and residents pride in that heritage, must be part of the strategy. Boston Heritage forum is a key player in that process. Local media and newspapers must be encouraged to publish good success news stories on a regular basis "success breeds success".

I am encouraged by the Strategy Plan, in that it recognises much of the above. Boston must be a tourist destination in its own right, and constantly promoted as such. However it should also be promoted as an integral part of the Lincolnshire, East Coast and South Lincolnshire visitor experience. A wider example of this is the part Boston will play in the forthcoming Mayflower celebrations.

The lack of hotel facilities in Boston means that we must attract day visitors staying anywhere in Lincolnshire and adjoining counties.

## **Comments on Boston Town Centre Conservation Area Management Plan 2017-2020**

- More work is required to improve car parking numbers and safety in the market place area. There seem to be several properties within the town centre that could be brought into use as accommodation.
- As previously mentioned a great move forward to make the town centre a more appealing place. Shoppers are after either a easy quick online service or a traditional market town feel with different and interesting shop experience which in my opinion needs the correct setting to create the authentic atmosphere. Stamford is obviously a good example. Is Not Attractive
- Too many cars allowed to enter and park in the Market Place with little control on the speed they are travelling. The butcher with a Market Stall is using a loud speaker system to advertise his business. I'm certain this is against the law but if not it should be actively discouraged because if every business did likewise the Market Place would become a very unpleasant place visit.
- the plan appears to be little more than asking business owners if they would kindly make their properties look nice and well maintained. Considering how many of these properties are foreign owned & managed, I will be very surprised if the this has any more than very limited effect.
- Historic England welcome the draft Conservation Area Management Plan, and hope the following comments are helpful. Recent Historic England publication: Among the recent investments in Boston's heritage (section 5) could be mentioned the publication in 2015 of Boston, Lincolnshire: Historic North Sea port and market town. This drew on research at both local and national level and provides a valuable resource for understanding the town's historic environment and informing its future conservation. Masterplanning: At the launch event of Boston, Lincolnshire: Historic North Sea port and market town, attended by some 60 people, there was a fruitful and lively discussion on the opportunity to introduce the principle of masterplanning. This would provide a long-term steer for future development, which is arguably missing from the draft CA MP, and ensure that development is managed both proactively and reactively to fulfil a guiding vision. Among the propositions which emerged from that discussion were the following: 1. Get Boston 'looking to the river' once more 2. Make John Adams Way work better as a street through urban design led development and public realm investment 3. Take opportunistic measures, such as revealing the quay steps in car park at Packhorse Quay when the opportunity arises. Full notes of that discussion can be provided by Paul Bodenham at Historic England. Link to Heritage Strategy: As noted in our response to the Heritage Strategy, the Boston Conservation Area Management Plan expresses some clear and very welcome commitments on the Council's part, particularly the Priorities and Objectives on p6 onwards. Explicit connections are made in the CA MP to the Strategy, but the connections are much less clear the other way. We suggest that the Strategy should summarise the Priorities and Objectives of the CA MP, to reduce the risk of Boston Heritage Forum members overlooking, and failing to engage in, the important ambitions set out in the CA MP. In particular it would be beneficial to reproduce Table 1 of the CA MP in the strategy, where appropriate identifying actions to which partners and the BHF can contribute. Article 5 Directions: The CA MP identified that Article 4 Directions are available as a management tool. However we feel it could go further and take the opportunity to make a commitment issuing to

Article 4 Directions in specific circumstances. If time does not permit detail on these to be included in the final CA MP.

- All front elevations and shopfronts must be in character of our Conservation Area. Non-compliant premises must be served with enforcement notices. Legal but inappropriate premises should be individually advised on refurbishment and assisted where possible to come up to standard. Property owners/tenants must be encouraged to regularly maintain their shopfronts from ground level to roof height.

Shop window displays and upper floor windows must be appropriately dressed to a Conservation Area standard and principles with no unsightly and random poster displays. "Decals" should be banned. Vacant sites and unoccupied premises must be properly maintained to give the impression of being beneficially occupied.

Vehicular highways, pedestrian areas and car parking facilities must be integrated to accommodate all users in a user-friendly fashion.

Full use should be made of our Central Park and town centre open spaces for markets, shows, exhibitions etc. Redefine the use of the open space in the Market Place on non-market days and maintain vehicular access to premises, car parking and taxis in the southern half of the Market Place. The northern half becoming de-pedestrianised (except for access) and connected to existing Strait Bargate pedestrian precinct, thus creating a clear pedestrian friendly area including that half of the Market Place with Dolphin Lane, Petticoat Lane, Strait Bargate and Pescod Square.

Provide a user-friendly seating throughout this predominantly pedestrian area and promote commercial and leisure activity and entertainment to create a vibrant and busy central hub to town centre on a daily basis.

Conserving and improving the Conservation Area is as much about buildings, streetscape, etc as the use of the space. A vibrant, busy and commercially profitable town centre conservation area automatically encourages property owners/tenants to be proud of their environment and to maintain their premises to a high standard.

## **Comments on Boston Shop Front Guide**

- Excellent guide for hopefully a more tasteful town centre. Pleased to see the issue has been raised which will hopefully create a town the locals are more proud of and willing to spend more time and money in. More work is required to improve car parking numbers and safety in the market place area. There seem to be several properties within the town centre that could be brought into use as accommodation.
- I do like the beast on the van belonging to the butcher on market day.
- in principal, the idea is basically sound, in practice, however, only time will tell.
- Unfortunately time has not permitted us to comment on this. Paul Bodenham, Local Engagement Adviser, Historic England [paul.bodenham@historicengland.org.uk](mailto:paul.bodenham@historicengland.org.uk)
- To maximise the benefits, both visual and commercial, of Boston's heritage in the town centre, all properties must conform to the historic architectural principles. Historic design features must be re-instated and a 'whole property' approach to refurbishment and maintenance, rather than simply the 'shop front' must be adopted.

Many properties have historic internal features which are no longer visible, having been hidden away as not being compatible with present day retail display and space requirement. Such features should be opened up to public view and incorporated into the retail space, thereby enhancing the historic importance of the building as a whole. It can be done e.e.g Libertys of London. Whoever possible historic features both exzternal and internal should be re-instated and celebrated. Upper floor elevations are as important to the street scene as the ground level shop fronts. Individual features e.g. Lovely's Commercial Hotel painted signage on the south elevation of No.17 Market Place.

Shop window display should all be of high quality. Random posters in windows should be banned 'Decals' should be banned and removed from the townscape. Night time shop fronts are also important. External blinds and shutters should not be allowed. If security measures are needed, they must maintain a live streetscape appearance.