

CABINET

18 December 2013

Title: Addition of the Sacred Heart Convent to the Local List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest	
Report of the Leader of the Council	
Open Report	For Decision
Wards Affected: Goresbrook Ward	Key Decision: yes
Report Author: Francesca Cliff, Principal Planning Policy Officer	Contact Details: Tel: 020 8227 3910 E-mail: francesca.cliff@lbbd.gov.uk
Accountable Divisional Director: Jeremy Grint, Divisional Director Regeneration	
Accountable Director: Graham Farrant, Chief Executive	
Summary: The Local List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest was approved by Cabinet on 21 April 2009 (Minute 174 refers). The local list is currently being reviewed. In advance of the updated list being reported to Cabinet, officers are recommending that the Sacred Heart Convent on Goresbrook Road is added. The landowner is objecting to the local listing. This site has been brought forward for local listing as an application for the demolition of the building and erection of 20 two and three bedroom homes was refused by the Council's Development Control Board on 14 October 2013. The local listing may not have any impact on this proposal but it does signal that the Council would resist the loss of the building when considering any future proposals for the site.	
Recommendation(s) The Cabinet is recommended to approve the addition of the Sacred Heart Convent, Goresbrook Road, Dagenham, to the Local List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest	
Reason(s) To assist the Council's vision to encourage growth and unlock the potential of Barking and Dagenham and its residents and its priority of reducing crime and fear of crime by safeguarding an important heritage asset which will help boost civic pride and build community cohesion.	

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The Local List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest was approved by Cabinet on 21 April 2009 (Minute 174 refers). The list comprises 135 buildings which although not worthy of formal listing are of local historical or architectural interest and important in helping define the character of the borough's built environment and provide links to its past. The list was put together following consultation with professional bodies such as English Heritage and Design for London and local interest groups such as the Barking and District Historical Society, Creekmouth Preservation Society, the Faith Forum, the Church Commission, Centre for Independent Living, Barking and Dagenham Access Group, and Chadwell Heath Historical Society.
- 1.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) classifies a locally listed building as a non-designated heritage asset; as distinct from those buildings which are statutorily listed and classified as designated heritage assets. The NPPF makes clear that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining a planning application. In weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset. Similarly the Council's Local Plan aims to protect and wherever possible enhance the borough's historic environment.
- 1.3 The Council made an application to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport to add the convent to the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest. On 6 November the Secretary of State informed the Council that when judged against the published listing criteria, the Sacred Heart Convent, Dagenham did not merit listing for the following principal reasons:
- Architectural interest: although built of good quality brickwork the composition is bland and lacks symmetry with standard fittings for the period;
 - Historic interest: lack of evidence of association with a leading cleric, architect, patron or a development of worship;
 - Degree of alteration: very large late C20 continuous dormers on the front and back and protruding lift shaft and additional staircase.
- 1.4 However English Heritage considered that the building is clearly of local interest.

2. Proposal and Issues

- 2.1 The report to 21 April 2009 Cabinet committed the Council to reviewing the local list every five years. This is in line with the National Planning Policy Framework which states that local planning authorities should have up-to-date evidence about the historic environment in their area and use it to assess the significance of heritage assets and the contribution they make to their environment.
- 2.2 This site has been brought forward for local listing as an application for the demolition of the building and erection of 20 two and three bedroom homes was refused by the Council's Development Control Board on 14 October 2013. The local listing may not have any impact on this proposal but it does signal that the Council

would resist the loss of the building when considering any future proposals for the site which involves its loss.

- 2.3 This building was constructed in the 1920s or early 1930s, probably by an architect working for the Roman Catholic diocese. The convent was established to serve the workers of the Ford Motor Works and their families, many of them residents on the Becontree estate and Roman Catholic. Therefore it is clearly of local historical interest.
- 2.4 The building can be described as having been built in a Neo-Georgian style with two storeys in red brick. It has two adjoining wings and a cupola on the roof of the central section. The main entrance doors are framed by mock Doric columns and a scrolled pediment. The Convent retains the original sash windows and features two larger round headed windows on the western wing which may have served a chapel. There is a dentil course underneath the eaves. The building is set back from Goresbrook Road in well kept mature gardens which give the building a stately appearance. The site is secured to the front with a short brick plinth topped with decorative railings interspersed with brick piers and well maintained hedging behind. The garden to the rear provides a sense of retreat and is complemented by a sculpture at the end of the central path.
- 2.5 The integrity and harmony of the building's original design has, in Council officers' opinion, been undermined by more recent interventions. These include a large dormer into the roof (front and rear) to make a third level, stairs and lift to the rear providing access to upper floors, and a single storey timber extension on the east wing. However despite these unsympathetic additions the building is locally significant due to its local architectural and historic value and compares favourably with the other buildings already on the list and therefore warrants inclusion. The Convent is a prominent local landmark, is a good and rare local example of an early 20th Century neo-Georgian institutional building and positively contributes to the character and appearance of the area. Therefore officers recommend the building is added to the local list. This is supported by the English Heritage assessment which although it did not regard the building as worth of statutory listing considered that it was clearly of local interest. It is also consistent with the definition of significance for heritage policy in the National Planning Policy Framework.

3. Options Appraisal

- 3.1 In terms of its architectural and historic interest the convent compares favourably with the other buildings already on the list and therefore is considered to warrant inclusion.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 The original local list was consulted on from 12 January to 6 March 2009 with target groups. The addition of the Sacred Heart Convent ahead of the review of the local list has not been consulted on however there was public support for its retention in response to the recent planning application for the site. A 23 signature petition was received objecting on a number of issues including the loss of the Sacred Heart Convent building on the basis it forms an important part of the identity of the street and is a prominent local landmark and that the Council should take particular care to reinforce local distinctiveness. English Heritage also responded stating that this

was one of the few local buildings designed with more than function in mind. They went on to state that the building is a local landmark and that consideration should be given to its potential for conversion rather than demolition.

- 4.2 A comprehensive report 36 page report assessing the significance of the Sacred Heart Convent and in particular its eligibility for local listing as a non-designated heritage asset has been received from Beacon Planning Limited appointed by Gerald Eve LLP on behalf of the Trustees of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary and Croudace Partnership. The report concludes that:

“It is recognised that the Convent building has a certain local interest due to its historical association with the Dagenham plant and its community. It was, however, never designed to be a landmark or have a designed landscape around it, and what group value it has was lost when the schools nearby were demolished to make way for housing. It is also no longer an active part of the community, and is now unused with much of its original communal value being transferred to the nearby Harmony House. While the Convent is distinct from the domestic style of its immediate surroundings and is of some aesthetic interest externally and internally, its architectural interest is limited due to its common neo-Georgian styling externally and the neo-Classical features internally, which are of no great rarity or significance. Its value has been further limited by the later extensions and alterations to the building. In conclusion, while the Convent has some local interest and value, it is not of sufficient architectural or historic interest to categorically justify its inclusion on the local list.”

- 4.3 Clearly there is a difference of opinion about the value of this heritage asset and therefore how locally significant it is. Both parties agree that the building is of local significance but the Trustees consider this it is limited. However the Council’s Core Strategy is clear that compared to many other areas the Borough has relatively few protected historic environment assets and therefore the Council will take particular care to protect and wherever possible enhance the borough’s historic environment and to reinforce local distinctiveness. Clearly the loss of the convent would be detrimental to this objective.

5. Financial Implications

Implications completed by: Philip Horner, Principal Accountant

- 5.1 The Sacred Heart Convent is currently owned by its Trustees who are responsible for the costs of its upkeep.
- 5.2 If this building is added to the List of Local Buildings of Special Architectural and Historic Interest, there would be no liability created on this Authority to contribute towards its costs in the future.
- 5.3 Therefore, this report has no financial implications.

6. Legal Implications

Implications completed by: Paul Feild, Senior Corporate Governance Lawyer

- 6.1 Conservation of heritage assets is one of the 12 core principles of the National Planning Policy Framework. So the demarcation of a site and buildings as a heritage asset means that its status is a material consideration when taking planning decisions. Nevertheless to place a building on the Local List buildings does not afford the same level of protection as if statutorily listed.
- 6.2 Inclusion on the Local List is advisory only; it is solely to highlight their local significance to the built character and amenity of an area. It does not provide the Council with additional planning powers or create extra burdens on the landowner. It does mean that there will be an expectation that planning considerations, as far as is reasonable, will take account of the need to preserve Locally Listed Buildings when considering applications for planning permission.

7. Other Implications

- 7.1 **Risk Management** This report is recommending that the Sacred Heart Convent is added to the local list due to its local architectural and historic interest. This will also increase the protection it enjoys through the planning system.
- 7.2 **Customer Impact** The Council's Heritage Strategy 2013-2016 recognises that the historic environment is a vital part of place making. It provides character, distinctiveness and a sense of place. It helps people be proud of where they live.
- 7.3 **Crime and Disorder Issues** Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places a responsibility on local authorities to consider the crime and disorder implications of any proposals. A locally listed building that is well cared for can contribute to the local identity of an area and encourage a sense of pride in and respect for the local environment.

Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report: None

List of appendices: None