



City Centre & Kelham Island Industrial Conservation Areas Representation to Planning Committee

I am speaking today on behalf of Hallamshire Historic Buildings, The Victorian Society South Yorkshire, Sheffield Conservation Advisory Group and the Castlegate Partnership.

Six years ago a consultation on Castlegate was abruptly cancelled. Now a larger area is recommended for designation, using funds bid for and won by a Planning team under new leadership. By any measure this is progress, and a testament to the dedication of officers. We must not lose sight of that. We also thank them for a detailed consultation process which we look forward to continuing as the Management Plans are developed.

Even so, there is widespread and profound disappointment that after huge voluntary effort by stakeholders to develop proposals collaboratively the outcome is little different to the Council's pre-consultation report. Many stakeholder suggestions are dismissed for less than convincing reasons. This disappointment is felt by all the organisations for which I speak, as well as ward councillors and the Member of Parliament for Sheffield Central.

A significant opportunity is missed by not designating the Wicker and Victoria Quays. I draw members' attention to the detailed case for designating the Wicker at Appendix B (2D). This consultation feedback was originally not sent to members, so I am grateful to officers for attaching it to the agenda late last week at my request.

Officers acknowledge the historic significance of both the Wicker and Victoria Quays but claim that their character is "distinct from the City Centre conservation area". This is strongly disputed. The Wicker document lays out clear historical connections across multiple themes and eras with the adjacent Castlegate area, which officers do not consider "distinct" from the City Centre. These areas urgently need designation to avoid a repeat of the decay and destruction caused by the six-year delay in Castlegate. This also supports integration and access to resources in an area strongly related to and used by Black and Minoritised Ethnic communities and their businesses and serving nearby areas of deprivation.

Officers also rejected smaller additions suggested by stakeholders, insisting that each such area must individually justify designation. This is wrong: designation is of an area as a whole, and National Planning Policy Framework paragraphs 219 and 220 make it abundantly clear that there will be buildings in Conservation Area that do not contribute, and even some that are negative. This is also Historic England's advice; otherwise Conservation Areas become a "Swiss cheese" of holes with less positive sites cut out.

There is a large hole around Westfield Terrace exactly where unsympathetic development could do the greatest harm. It contains 20th and 21st century buildings which are of merit; others less good could easily be replaced by something worse. It also contains the listed portico of the former Mount Zion Congregational Chapel, where formerly enslaved African American Moses Roper made campaigning speeches. Another hole at Snig Hill contains early council housing at Corporation Buildings and pioneering music venue the Black Swan, where The Clash first performed. These are all the heritage of ordinary people, which in a diverse city should be celebrated.

We believe that the real issue is of limited resources. The elastic will stretch as far as Castlegate, but extend it further and it may snap. Therefore, these are our requests to members:

1. Approve without delay the designation of all areas recommended by officers, and the name change, corrected to keep the word "industrial". Sheffield should be proud that Kelham Island was one of the country's first industrial Conservation Areas, and the name must continue to show this;
2. Ask officers to quantify the resource needed to appraise and if appropriate designate all extensions proposed by stakeholders;
3. Recommend to the Transport, Regeneration and Climate Policy Committee that they urgently seek the required resources to enable this work to be carried out in the very near future.