

## **Agenda Item No 14**

### **Executive Board**

**20 February 2006**

#### **Report of the Assistant Director (Planning & Development)**

#### **Buildings at Risk**

#### **1 Summary**

- 1.1 Every year since 1998 English Heritage has published a register of the most important listed buildings (those at grades 1 and 2\*, representing the top 5% of all listed buildings) at risk through neglect and decay. This is a report for information to update members on the buildings in North Warwickshire on the latest register, published in July of last year. There are currently nine buildings included in total, seven of which have been on the register since 1998. In the past year there have been repairs and/or action taken to arrest decay on three of these, and plans are at an early stage to bring two others into beneficial reuse. It is English Heritage's intention to have strategies for repair and re-use in place for individual buildings on the list, though in cases where there is a lack of owner co-operation, these can be very difficult to realise. Local authorities can make a contribution and with the Heritage and Conservation Officer now in post, it is intended that individual strategies will be reviewed with English Heritage Inspectors where necessary, and the buildings monitored. It is important to note however, that in the final analysis, the responsibility for the repair and maintenance of Listed Buildings lies with their owners.

#### **2 Recommendation to the Board**

- a. **That progress on rescuing buildings at risk within the Borough be noted.**
- b. **That the Heritage and Conservation Officer liaises with English Heritage on the review of individual rescue strategies, and continues to monitor and report on the issue.**

#### **3 Report Background: English Heritage Buildings At Risk Register**

- 3.1 Buildings considered at risk or vulnerable to loss are placed on the register in one of six priority categories based on a combination of their condition and occupancy. These range from priority category A, where there is immediate risk of rapid deterioration or loss of fabric and no occupier or solution agreed for repair, to priority category F, where a building is under repair and an end user identified. Where buildings are not capable of occupation or beneficial use e.g. bridges or ruined structures, they are considered to be at risk if in a very bad or poor condition, or if they are in fair condition but lack arrangements for their future maintenance.
- 3.2 In general such buildings are candidates for English Heritage grant aid. The Council, while not having grant resources, does have Listed Building enforcement powers (which are also available to English Heritage though only used in exceptional circumstances). Sadly these powers are unlikely to bring about the long-term rescue of buildings incapable of beneficial use, which unfortunately is the case with several structures included on the list for North Warwickshire.

#### 4 **Report Detail: Buildings on the At Risk Register and Their Priority for Action**

##### 4.1 **1. Astley Castle:- Scheduled Ancient Monument and Listed Grade 2 . Priority Category A (At extreme risk). Owner the Arbury Estate.**

Astley Castle is a fortified moated manor house of 13<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> century origin. The majority of the standing fabric dates from the mid16<sup>th</sup> to early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, with 18<sup>th</sup> century additions. The building has been derelict since a disastrous fire over 25 years ago. It is now little more than a shell with walls in a very parlous state, with virtually all of the interior destroyed or in irreparable condition as a result of the fire, subsequent vandalism, and decay. Consolidation of the whole structure is not economically practicable and further loss of important historic fabric appears inevitable. Even consolidation of part of ruined building will be extremely expensive and unlikely to be possible without some form of enabling development. In 1998 English Heritage and Heritage Lottery Fund offered grants for a scheme of consolidation and partial conversion to holiday accommodation with the Landmark Trust, but the scheme fell through because of cost. The Trust had expressed renewed interest in a curtailed scheme early last year, but nothing has yet come forward.

Conclusion: Realistically it seems that the remnants of the castle will effectively have to be managed as a ruin, possibly through the involvement of the Landmark Trust. There may yet be scope for something more ambitious along the lines of the Trusts last scheme and their interest will continue to be monitored.

##### 4.2 **2.Stable Block at Astley Castle: Listed Grade 2\* Priority Category C; (Slow decay; no way forward agreed) Owner the Arbury Estate**

The stable block is of 18<sup>th</sup> century date and a good example of the Gothic Revival style. It has been disused for many years but is capable of conversion to a beneficial use. It is suffering from slow decay, and, being disused, is vulnerable to vandalism and arson.

Conclusion: This is a building capable of beneficial reuse and this will be a priority candidate for strategy review with English Heritage and the owners. Its condition will continue to be monitored.

##### 4.3 **3. Grendon Bridge: Scheduled Ancient Monument and Listed Grade 2\* Priority Category C (Slow decay; no way forward agreed)**

The bridge, which crosses the River Anker, was built probably in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. It is constructed of sandstone with four chamfered arches and cutwaters to both sides. It is now in poor condition with parts of the parapet missing. The bridge is in private ownership. Discussions are on going between the owners and English Heritage about possible grant aid and a management agreement.

Conclusion: Continue to support English Heritage in their efforts towards securing the take-up of grant aid and a management agreement with the owner.

4.4 **4. Hartshill Castle Ruins: Scheduled Ancient Monument and Listed Grade 2 Priority Category E (Under repair). Owner Mrs J Lapworth**

This is another ruinous structure being the fragmentary remains of a 13<sup>th</sup> century castle built of Hartshill granite with sandstone dressings. It has been slowly decaying due to erosion, structural problems, and vandalism. The ruin is currently being consolidated in a two-phase programme of repairs with grant aid from English Heritage. The first phase is currently underway. The owner intends to establish a trust to look after the monument.

Conclusion: The owner is positively disposed towards the building and progress with consolidation of the ruin continues to be monitored.

4.5 **5. Kingsbury Hall, Kingsbury: Scheduled Ancient Monument and Listed Grade 2\* Priority Category A (At extreme risk) Owner Mr Ian Fray**

Kingsbury Hall is another impressive stone manor house of high quality of c 1500 with later additions, and a 14<sup>th</sup> century external curtain wall to an elevated escarpment facing the River Anker. Internally it contains a first floor hall with heavy chamfered beams and joists and excellent 16<sup>th</sup> century carpentry throughout. In March of last year a temporary scaffolded roof was placed over the building protecting it from the elements and providing access to enable urgent emergency works to prevent roof collapse. The owner is currently drawing up a scheme for converting the building to apartments, which has informal support in principle from English Heritage. Detailed proposals are now awaited.

Conclusion: The owner has demonstrated that he is positively disposed to the rescue of this important historic building to beneficial use and has carried out costly emergency works to halt further deterioration. Progress towards an acceptable scheme of reuse will be encouraged and monitored.

4.6 **6. Remains of Maxstoke Priory: Scheduled Ancient Monument and Listed Grade 2\* Priority Category C (Slow decay; no way forward agreed) Owner**

Maxstoke Priory comprises the remains of an early 14<sup>th</sup> century Augustinian monastery and includes an infirmary, precinct walls, outer gatehouse with attached barn and farmhouse. The structures are steadily decaying and the infirmary is propped. Emergency works were undertaken in 2001 following partial collapse of the latter.

Conclusion: Although emergency works have been carried out, there is no indication of long-term use or refurbishment. This is a priority candidate for strategy review with English Heritage.

4.7 **7. Middleton Hall Middleton: Listed Grade 2\***  
**Priority Category E (Under repair) Owner Middleton Hall Trust**

Middleton Hall is a country house, outwardly of early 18<sup>th</sup> century date but incorporating buildings of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. It also has extensive early 19<sup>th</sup> century additions. The buildings are owned by the Middleton Hall Trust who have been repairing the complex of buildings with volunteer labour following acquisition in the early 1980s. A building repair strategy for the whole site was prepared some years ago and the latter stages of this are now underway.

Conclusion: It appears likely that this complex of buildings will be removed from the register within the next two years.

4.8 **8. Gatehouse to Polesworth Abbey: Scheduled Ancient Monument and Listed Grade 2\***  
**Priority Category E (Vacant with no identified user)**  
**Owner Polesworth Parochial Church Council**

A late 14<sup>th</sup> century abbey gatehouse with 17<sup>th</sup> century alterations and additions. Urgent repairs were grant aided c. 1998 by English Heritage and the building is wind and weatherproof. The gatehouse forms part of the Polesworth Abbey complex, which has been the subject of a well considered and visionary strategy for community use led by Father Phillip Wells. Part of the scheme won one of the Council's Environmental Awards this year. Promising discussions have been held with the Heritage Lottery and it is hoped that the building can be brought into a residential use connected with the future activities of the abbey complex.

Conclusion: This is another building in the hands of an enlightened occupier, and there appears every prospect that the current initiative will materialise.

4.9 **9. Moat, footbridge and gatepiers to Shustoke Hall Farmhouse: Scheduled Ancient Monument and Listed Grade 2\***  
**Priority Category C (Slow decay; no way forward agreed)**  
**Owner**

This is a homestead moat constructed in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century with sandstone revetments, footbridge, and brick gatepiers. It also includes a late 18<sup>th</sup> century service wing in poor condition.

Conclusion: A way forward needs to be identified for this group of monuments and it will therefore be another priority case for strategy review with English Heritage.

## 5 Report Implications

### 5.1 Financial Implications

5.1.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

### 5.2 Crime and Disorder Implications

5.2.1 None

### 5.3 Legal and Human Rights Implications

5.3.1 None

**5.4 Sustainability Implications**

- 5.4.1 The report has sustainability implications in that it seeks to preserve and enhance some of the most important built heritage of North Warwickshire, an irreplaceable asset, for future generations.

**5.5 Personnel Implications**

- 5.5.1 None

**5.6 Portfolio Holder and Ward Members Consultation**

- 5.6.1 None

**5.7 Risk Management Implications**

- 5.7.1 None.

The Contact Officer for this report is Richard Preston (01827 719446).