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Sent: Friday, April 24, 2009 4:17 PM  
Subject: Moor Pool

Rob

Thank you for your time and hospitality yesterday. I offered to write a note to summarise our discussions and I have agreed the comments below with Kim and Mary. I hope this proves useful. Please feel free to share it as you think appropriate.

Moor Pool is remarkable in a number of ways. One is the design consistency of the housing which offers a subtle range of variations around a theme closely related to the Arts and Crafts Movement and to other housing improvements of the early years of the twentieth century such as the Garden Cities. Another is the interlacing of an integrated system of open spaces, adapted to the topography of the site, through the housing such that every space was intended for some recreational or productive use. The philanthropic founder of Moor Pool clearly had in mind a vision of the kind of life style that the estate would offer and it is remarkable that many of the spaces are still used in the way that Mr Nettlefold foresaw a hundred or more years ago. While many of the houses have undergone alterations, the design consistency has not yet been lost and care in the maintenance and planting of private spaces contributes to street scenes of real delight.

How significant Moor Pool is in national terms would be difficult to assess without a full comparative study. Clearly comparison would have to be made with Garden Cities such as Letchworth and Welwyn and with developments like Hampstead Garden Suburb. On a regional level, however I am familiar with comparators in Leicester (Humberstone Garden Suburb), Stafford (Burton Manor Village) and Shrewsbury (Harlescott). I am less familiar with Bulmer Village in Hereford but this would also clearly be an interesting comparator. Compared with the regional examples that I know Moor Pool is very clearly pre-eminent in the scale and ambition of its design vision and the completeness with which it appears to have been realised in a very short period of years. There appears to be every reason to regard Moor Pool as very significant, historically and architecturally, on at least a regional level. Kim called it 'an exceptional survival'.

One aspect of this significance that we discussed at some length yesterday is the importance of the network of spaces. Our judgement was that this is a key part of the character of Moor Pool, that many of the spaces were of good quality, and that they should be treated as an integrated system in the consideration of development proposals affecting them.

Since English Heritage offered advice on infill proposals from the estate owners, particularly on the land in the triangle formed by Ravenhurst Road, Moor Pool Avenue and Margaret Grove, understanding of the area has grown through the preparation of the conservation area appraisal, through research carried out locally, and through discussions such as yesterday's. If I were offering advice now I would recommend that the assessment of development proposals should be carried out in the light of the importance of the open space network as an integrated system rather than considering small sites in isolation. I would also be conscious of the importance of uninterrupted views across the valley between Margaret Grove and Moor Pool Avenue. In the light of growing knowledge and understanding of Moor Pool I would be much more cautious about the principle of residential development on the garage site and the design constraints that might apply even if development were acceptable in principle.

This would particularly be the case if there were a realistic chance of returning the garage site to allotment use and perhaps reopening the culverted stream to provide an attractive public amenity.

This point leads on to our discussion about possible involvement by the HLF Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) . The first point is that HLF funding is generally not available to the private sector so attracting HLF funding would depend on the ownership of the Moor Pool spaces passing to some form of voluntary sector body such as a residents' co-operative. We cannot speak for the HLF but it appears to us that, if the transfer of the ownership of the spaces could be brought about then the way would be clear to preparing and implementing a plan for the management and restoration of the spaces and perhaps other amenities at Moor Pool. A residents' group of some kind might get development funding in advance of a bid for capital funding.

Alternatively, even while the spaces are in their current ownership, residents could perhaps source funding to prepare a study of the significance of the spaces at Moor Pool and of the potential for restoration. We can advise as to who residents might approach to do such a study if you wish.

One aspect of the issue that we discussed yesterday on the journey back to the City Centre after the meeting was the possible addition of Moor Pool to the Register (the open space equivalent of the list for listed buildings). A study of significance might help this process but I will make initial enquiries with appropriate colleagues anyway.

Regards

Mike

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