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DEFINING AND MANAGING THE HISTORIC URBAN LANDSCAPE: REFLECTIONS ON THE ENGLISH EXPERIENCE AND SOME STORIES FROM LIVERPOOL

Abstract. The period since the 1960s has been characterised by growing societal concern with urban heritage protection and the development of legislative, fiscal and urban planning instruments that seek to ensure the protection and enhancement of historic buildings and environments. International organisations such as UNESCO and European level documents such as the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) have stressed the cultural and economic value of the 'wise management of natural and cultural heritage'. Since the 1970s many cities have sought to redefine and regenerate themselves through a revalorisation of their past and the protection and enhancement of their historic urban landscapes. Urban heritage has thus often come to be seen as a component of the territorial capital of places, and often had a symbiotic relationship with the objective of urban regeneration. However, urban heritage is not a static concept and ideas about what constitutes heritage, the value of different historic urban environments, and the contribution they can make to city development and regeneration continue to evolve. This paper reflects on this evolution in the context of the English planning system and illustrates some key trends and issues surrounding urban heritage through a consideration of recent and ongoing heritage related planning episodes in the northern English city of Liverpool.

Key words: heritage, conservation planning, conservation philosophy, Liverpool, historic urban landscape.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Set within the context of wider international discourses on heritage matters, and influenced by recent European heritage agendas (CEC, 1999; Council of Europe, 2011), England has seen an infiltration of social and cultural concerns enter and subtly modify the normative heritage discourse. Consequently, the term 'heritage' as defined through English legislation, policy and guidance has undergone several periods of adjustment. The first section of this paper problematizes the concept from the English perspective, tracing its evolution and highlighting some broad trends in urban heritage management. In particular it exposes three key shifts:

– a renewed focus on understanding *significance* and heritage *values* – widening the scope from those confined to the grand, monumental objects of a settlement, to a more holistic heritage landscape which depicts the immaterial/intangible aspects of cultural heritage;

– a diversion away from expert-led authoritarian approaches towards more community-led endeavours which focus on democratisation and widening participation;

– a territorial shift of focus from issues of national importance and unity to notions of local distinctiveness and non-designated assets.

This paper reflects on such shifts and the planning challenges they pose and considers some recent and ongoing heritage related planning episodes in the northern English city of Liverpool to unravel some palpable implications for planning practice.

2. WHAT IS ENGLISH 'HERITAGE'?

Like many other European heritage systems, heritage conservation applied through the English planning system has traditionally been regarded as an elitist, white, middle-class activity enjoyed by a self-selecting, well-educated and artistically literate social group. Concerned with aesthetics, architectural quality and age, this art-historical emphasis can be traced back to the 19th. century, being prevalent in the writings of Ruskin (1989 [1890]) and Morris (1877), and famously contested within the criticisms developed by Samuel (1994) and Hewison (1987). The birth of the conservation ethic, associated with European nation-building and pride, paved the way for a set of deeply-embedded assumptions about the nature of English heritage. These assumptions were to become naturalised, shaping and moulding English legislation, policy and guidance for the historic built environment.

To understand the rise of these assumptions, appreciating the convergence of heritage with planning is essential. In England and Wales, the Town and Country Planning Acts of 1945 and 1947 were the first to marry the two by introducing

a duty to compile statutory lists of buildings. Such concerns had 19th century roots, (particularly in the 'Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings', SPAB) but the impetus was provided by the ubiquitous demolition and rebuilding schemes following the Second World War (Tait and While, 2009). The statutory list takes the form of an inventory, based around a hierarchy of 'listing' at Grade I (buildings of exceptional importance, around 2.5% of all listed buildings), Grade II* (particularly important buildings of more than special interest), or Grade II (buildings of special interest). The architectural or historic significance of the building(s) is the prime determinant of inclusion in the list. This significance is stringently protected through a legal requirement to obtain listed building consent alongside planning permission for any proposed works or alteration (see 'Principles of Selection', DCMS, 2010). Given the focus on 'the building(s)', particular emphasis is given to special methods of construction and/or aesthetic elements that lend them their special architectural character (Turnpenny, 2004). This approach to listing generally means that individual iconic buildings tend to be prioritised over more modest buildings (While, 2007, p. 658). Moreover, selection is most likely 'to favour the spectacular over the mundane, the large over the small, the beautiful over the ugly and the unusual over the commonplace' (Ashworth, 1997, p. 97). This traditional ideological representation of heritage provides limited space for alternative understandings of heritage which focus on subaltern/vernacular heritage and/or emotional content.

3. MOUNTING CRITICISMS OF ENGLISH 'HERITAGE'

Such practices of heritage conservation applied through the English planning system have however been fiercely criticised. They have been described as immutable and one-dimensional, centred on 'elite/consensus history, nationalism, monumentality, tangibility, age and aesthetics' (Smith, 2006, p. 11). Scholars argue that this *authorised* heritage discourse (AHD) privileges the grand, material aspects of heritage value, whilst simultaneously excluding all conflicted or non-core accounts of heritage (Smith, 2006; Waterton, 2010). Indeed, there have been mounting criticisms that Western heritage is imagined as being inherently locked within the physical fabric of built forms (Byrne, 1991; Graham, 2002) and that instead, heritage should be understood 'within the discourses we construct about it' (Smith, 2006, p. 11). Smith goes on to state that there is, 'no such thing as heritage', arguing that the subject of our heritage 'gaze' (Urry, 1990), is, 'not so much a "thing" as a set of values and meanings' (Smith, 2006, p. 11). Within this critical context, it is possible to observe some key changes over the past few decades which have repositioned how heritage is considered through the English planning system today. Such adjustments provide the foundation for current approaches to plural interpretations of the values of the past.

4. WIDENING OF THE NORMATIVE HERITAGE DISCOURSE

In line with a widespread strengthening of local voices in planning in the 1960s, came a gradual expansion in the focus of conservation concerns (from 'objects' of a settlement, to cities, landscapes, gardens and human communities). Indeed, in England it was the 1967 Civic Amenities Act that for the first time enabled local authorities to designate Conservation Areas (Smith, 1969). Whilst the familiar notions of 'architectural' and 'historic interest' are still prevalent (for example in Section 69 of the Planning [Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas] Act 1990), there is a clear evolution in thinking around legacy, value and conceptualisations of heritage. As conservation areas are designated by local planning authorities, rather than central government, the introduction of the conservation 'area' enabled conservation thought and practice to expand and turn towards the notion of local distinctiveness. Local factors, such as a commitment to the preservation of local historic character and/or the industrial heritage, were suddenly important factors of conservation. Moreover, social concerns began to infiltrate the discursive arena. Heritage was deemed important to both 'individual and community identity' and linked to 'psychological well-being' (Pendlebury, 2009, p. 168). This wider understanding of heritage filtered into official guidance (DoE, 1973), which introduced a desire to protect 'the familiar and cherished local scene' (Pendlebury, 2009, p. 169). By the mid-1990s recognising the, 'anonymous familiar' (Pendlebury, 2009, p. 137) was increasingly popular, with according to Larkham (1999), the fastest growing type of conservation area designation being the residential suburb (*ibid*). Whilst various critics claimed that such unbounded conservation area designation systems were in fact, 'debasing the coinage' (Morton, 1991, quoted in Pendlebury 2009, p. 172), the focus was shifted to the transparency and operations of the heritage system, how special interest is defined, and whose opinions matter.

5. A NEW CONSERVATION PHILOSOPHY FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Under the banner of Heritage Protection Review (HPR) the beginning of the 21st century marked a seminal period in the development of public policy for the historic environment and an apparent drive towards the democratisation of heritage. This idea, exemplified by the publication 'Power of Place' (English Heritage, 2000), and underpinned by the policies and resources of the Heritage Lottery Fund,[1] gained support as part of a wider political narrative of inclusivity. 'Power

[1] The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has been supporting heritage in the UK since 1994 and currently has around £375 million to disburse every year raised from the UK National Lottery (see: http://www.hlf.org.uk/).

of Place' was in fact the first publication to actively promote democratic participation in the field of conservation (English Heritage, 2000, p. 23) and made a passionate case for the historic environment not to be, 'confined to some rarefied antiquarian realm but to be recognised as being in fact all around us' (Cowell, 2004, p. 28). At the heart of this publication was the acknowledgement of two basic notions. The first was that the past, present and future cannot be separated, but form an inextricably linked continuum. The business of conservation is thus not about preserving historically significant places on their own, frozen at some particular time, but allowing them to coexist in sustainable harmony with an ever-changing present. The second notion was that historic places do not have just one immutable value, but many overlapping values that reflect differing viewpoints. These are liable to evolve along with changes in people's own perceptions and interests (English Heritage, 2000).

Meanwhile 'The Historic Environment: A Force for Our Future' (DCMS, 2001), informed by 'Power of Place' emphasised the importance of taking account of this wider understanding of heritage, stating that 'heritage':

> […] is about more than bricks and mortar. It embraces the landscape as a whole, both urban and rural, and the marine archaeology sites around our shores. It shows us how our own forebears lived. It embodies the history of all the communities who have made their home in this country. It is part of the wider public realm in which we can all participate (DCMS, 2001, p. 4).

The document explicitly makes reference to the, 'gradual widening of the definition of what people regard as their heritage' (DCMS, 2001, p. 8, 7) and draws on examples of this wider definition in practice, such as the National Trust's purchase of Paul McCartney's childhood home in Liverpool, the investment in urban parks and gardens and the preservation of back-to-back housing in Birmingham and Manchester (DCMS, 2001). Furthermore, the publication recognises the use of 'heritage' as a tool to engage communities and foster collaborative and inclusive planning processes that can, 'bring communities together in a shared sense of belonging' (DCMS, 2001, p. 4).

These trends clearly fit in as part of a more international agenda, demonstrated inter alia by the Council of Europe's Faro Convention (2005). This discursive repositioning however required more explicit guidance to understand how such shifting concepts can be understood and managed in planning practice. The response to this was a publication entitled 'Conservation Principles' which focused on understanding 'significance' and devising a method for thinking systematically and consistently about the heritage 'values' that can be ascribed to places.

6. CONSERVATION PRINCIPLES IN PLANNING

'Conservation Principles' (English Heritage, 2008a) sets out six high-level principles to assist conservation planning and the idea of 'significance' lies at their core. In this publication, 'significance' is described as a collective term for the sum of all the heritage values attached to a place, be it a building, an archaeological site or a larger historic area such as a whole village or landscape (English Heritage, 2008a). It categorises these into four heritage values: evidential, historic, aesthetic and communal. Whilst the traditional notions of conservation are clearly still relevant within these categories, the notion of 'communal value' reflects the more intangible aspects of 'heritage' which relate to meanings, experiences and collective memories. Whilst non-statutory, 'Conservation Principles' represents a much more flexible interpretation of what constitutes acceptable conservation practice, far beyond the traditional exclusive emphasis on material fabric and statutory designated buildings and structures (Pendlebury, 2013). In particular, it emphasises the value of non-designated heritage assets in spatial planning decision-making.

7. NON-DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS

The importance of non-designated heritage assets is further highlighted in national planning policy for the historic environment (Planning Policy Statement 5 – 'PPS5') (Communities and Local Government, 2010)[2]. PPS5 gave considerably more weight to non-designated heritage assets than ever before and took a more holistic view of the built environment. For the first time, national planning policy drew explicit attention to *local* heritage and particularly to non-statutory local heritage designation (Local Listing). The supporting Local List Best Practice Guidance (published in 2012) was the first ever of its kind. It stated upfront that non-designated, non-exceptional heritage plays, 'an essential role in building and reinforcing a sense of local identity and distinctiveness' (English Heritage, 2012, p. 5). The Guide offers a selection of local decision-making criteria designed to capture and recognise the cultural heritage continuum. One of the local criteria relates to the asset's social and communal value. It defines this as:

> Relating to places perceived as a source of local identity, distinctiveness, social interaction and coherence; often residing in intangible aspects of heritage contributing to the 'collective memory' of a place.

[2] PPS5 was superseded by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (DCLG, 2010) in 2012.

This clearly represents a stated desire to broaden the spectrum of eligible, accepted, and legitimate heritage values at the local level; however various scholars claim that such non-statutory statements are merely window-dressing, operating purely at the level of rhetoric (Waterton, 2010).

8. HERITAGE (RE)BRANDING

Such apparent discursive shifts in the heritage discourse are indeed not unusual. The mutability of the normative heritage discourse can also be observed in a plethora of other ways, such as the way in which heritage conservation is publically portrayed by the state and their advisors for the historic environment, English Heritage. Depending on societal contexts and external pressures, the 'historic environment' has been (re)branded, presented as not only compatible, but even interdependent with organic sustainable growth. For example, conservation was promoted as an enabler of change and complementary to regeneration (English Heritage, 1998; 2004; 2006a; 2007; 2008b), essential for economic growth (English Heritage, 1999; 2002; 2005a); the source of social and economic instrumental benefits (DoE, 1987; DoE and Department of National Heritage (DNH), 1994; English Heritage, 2005b; 2008a) and more recently as symbiotic to concurrent goals related to sustainability, energy efficiency, renewable energy and wider climate change agendas (English Heritage, 2006b; 2008c, d, e; 2011b). It is however important to make a clear distinction between a subtle repositioning of the rhetoric around the value of conservation, and deeper transformations of the underlying assumptions guiding conservation planning. Indeed, despite the above adjustments, tensions continue to exist between heritage conservation and development in England, and the former has undoubtedly continued to privilege the material fabric of buildings and structures (Ludwig, 2013). In terms of statutory protection, the set of assumptions underpinning the traditional AHD have largely remained, albeit in a more flexible guise within an evolving framework (Hudson and James, 2007; Pendlebury, 2013). As such the above evolution of the concept has done little to radically transform the way in which heritage is formally (statutorily) protected and the continued evolution of the concept internationally poses increasing challenges for the English planning system.

9. CURRENT CHALLENGES FOR PLANNING

Such contemporary challenges primarily relate to the incessant development of the term at the international level and the consequent ambiguity and uncertainty this entails. Indeed, as a consequence of the mounting renegotiations on

the European stage, the notion of 'social' heritage is gathering increasing momentum in English conservation practice. It has been explicitly drawn into the conservation planning arena, held together by a discourse pertaining to human development, the exercising of basic human rights, and humanitarian concerns. Such discourse (re)frames heritage within the context of national unity, immigration, and plural societies, as well as paradigms of participation, cultural diversity and democratisation. For instance, at the European scale, there are increasing links being made between heritage and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Council of Europe, 2011). Of course, various scholars have for some years drawn attention to the complex links between 'heritage', 'identity' and 'belonging' (Dicks, 2000; Harrison, 2010) and noted – that the identification, acknowledgement and protection of 'heritage' is for some an important human need. These complexities must be further contextualised by the fact that there are an increasing number of local communities which now have an acknowledged and explicit *unconsensual* view about what heritage is, how and when it is created and to whom it belongs.

Such contemporary challenges must also be framed in the light of the UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (2011) and the explicit acknowledgement of non-exceptional landscapes which nevertheless are representative of collective memories and identities. Indeed, heritage is now generally understood to be a socially constructed, multi-valued and multi-layered concept, far broader and more inclusive than ever previously acknowledged. This discursive shift is accompanied by much confusion and dissonance, making practical application in rational planning environments a challenge (Ludwig, 2013). Indeed, the perceived subjectivity of the more intangible aspects of heritage value are generally deemed difficult to manage and operationalise and perceived to be largely indefensible through the English planning appeal system (*ibid*). Despite these difficulties, lessons from the Vienna Memorandum (2005) and from UNESCO's decision to revoke Dresden's (Germany) World Heritage status (2009), imply that a World Heritage city like Liverpool must swiftly come to terms with such new thinking; understanding and wisely managing all of the diverse heritage assets which contribute to its territorial capital, whilst simultaneously delivering its urban regeneration ambitions.

10. DEFINING AND MANAGING HERITAGE IN LIVERPOOL

Liverpool is a place that has experienced dramatic patterns of growth, decline and renewal over the past 200 years (Sykes *et al*., 2013). The city has a rich legacy of historic buildings and urban environments reflecting the wealth generated

by the port and rapid urban expansion from the 18th century until the inter-war years of the 20th century (Hughes, 1964; Sharples and Stonard, 2008). The universal importance of Liverpool's built heritage and historical role was recognised in 2004 by the designation of the UNESCO Maritime Mercantile City World Heritage Site (WHS) which covers significant portions of the city's docklands and city centre (Liverpool City Council, 2009) (Fig. 1). Liverpool is also a city where major change of the built environment has always occurred with some particularly significant changes taking place since the mid-20th century as a result of economic restructuring and its impacts on land use, and planned intervention through different phases of urban renewal (Brown, 2009). The growing societal concern with heritage protection since the 1960s and development of policy instruments that sought to ensure the protection and enhancement of historic buildings and environments was strongly represented in Liverpool (City Centre Planning Group, 1965; Massey, 2014). The 1970s were marked by changes in the approach to urban renewal with, for example, a gradual shift from mass demolition of areas of terraced housing towards refurbishment (Couch, 2003). Action by campaign groups like SAVE Britain's Heritage and the Merseyside Civic Society also served to highlight the parlous condition of the city's built heritage assets and save key assets like the Albert Dock complex (Powell and SAVE, 1984) (Fig. 2). As the city struggled economically from the 1970s onwards, the orientation of its regeneration increasingly reflected Pendlebury and Strange's (2011, p. 383) wider observations that:

> Over the course of the 1980s and 1990s conservation planning practice began to embrace and promote the idea of the historic environment as an asset to be used and adapted for economic gain.

And:

> […] as local authorities became tuned to culture as an instrument of urban renewal, the historic environment became a vital resource for some cities in the regeneration process, whether it be "jewel cities"[3] or edge of centre locations in bigger industrial cities.

Pendlebury and Strange (2011, p. 375) also allude to the significance of Liverpool within this widertrend, noting that:

> The most high-profile and exemplar scheme of this combining of conservation with regeneration was the adoption by the Merseyside Development Corporation of the Albert Dock, a large complex of Grade I listed warehouses, as its flagship scheme. (Pendlebury and Strange, 2011, p. 375).

[3] Places traditionally seen as heritage centres such as York or Chester (see Pendlebury and Strange, 2011, p. 371–375).

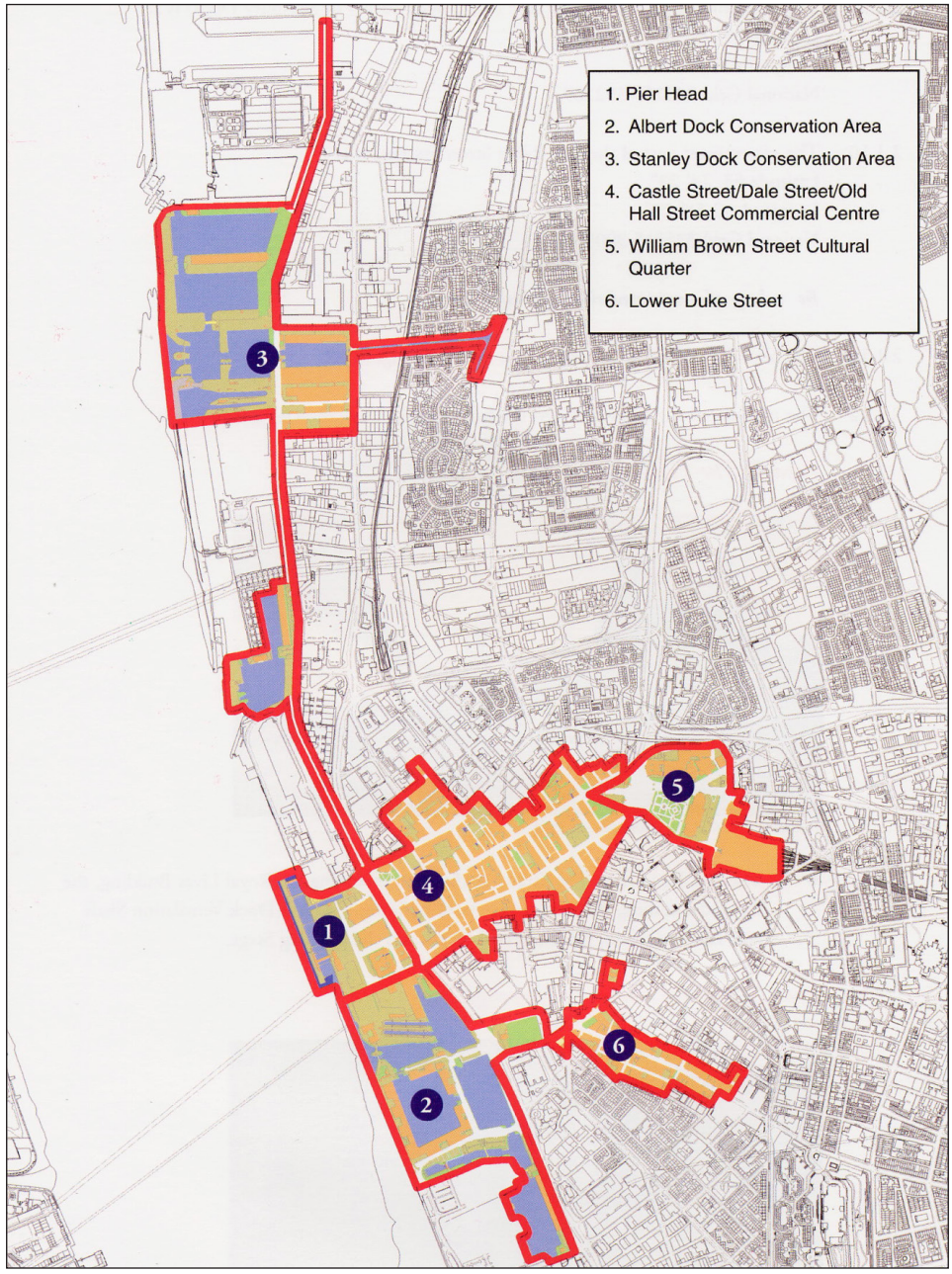

Fig. 1. Liverpool, Maritime Mercantile City World Heritage Site
Source: Liverpool City Council

Fig. 2. The Restored Albert Dock, Liverpool Maritime Mercantile City World Heritage Site
Source: © Matthew Cocks (2012)

In many ways Liverpool can thus be seen as an archetype of a post-industrial city which has sought to reinvent itself through the valorization of its heritage and cultural assets; an impression reinforced by its successful bid to become European Capital of Culture 2008 (Garcia *et al.*, 2010). An expansive view of heritage has been adopted by many policy makers which incorporates not just the tangible artifacts and built heritage of the city but also its diverse artistic, musical, sporting and community cultures. Yet as in many places, the relationship between regeneration and heritage has sometimes been problematic as well as symbiotic. The following accounts of two heritage-related 'planning episodes' (Healey, 2004) explore some of the issues which have been encountered around this relationship.

10.1. Liverpool Waters

In 2004, Peel Holdings, a major regional property developer acquired the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company, and large areas of derelict and underused waterfront land. In Liverpool the company subsequently proposed the £5.5 billion 'Liverpool Waters' dockland redevelopment scheme (www.liverpoolwaters.co.uk) (Fig. 3), for which outline planning consent was granted in 2012 by the local planning authority Liverpool City Council.

Fig. 3. Images of the proposed 'Liverpool Waters' development
Source: © http://www.liverpoolwaters.co.uk/

The proposals are part of a wider vision for a development corridor between Liverpool and Manchester known as the Atlantic Gateway in which the company owns many assets. In 2013 the UK government confirmed that it would not 'call-in' the Liverpool Waters application for scrutiny at the national level, leaving de-

cision-making to the local level. Liverpool Waters and a similar scheme on the other side of the river Mersey called 'Wirral Waters' are planned to unfold over a period of 30–40 years and are envisaged as mixed use developments providing some 25,000 new homes and over 40,000 new jobs. The scale, density, height and design of many of the buildings in the initial Liverpool Waters plans caused local and international concern with regards to the impact that the proposed new skyline would have on Liverpool's waterfront, the WHS, and local heritage (Jones, 2014). English Heritage formally objected to the outline planning permission and in 2012 UNESCO added the Maritime Mercantile City to the list of endangered World Heritage Sites arguing that the Liverpool Waters proposals "will extend the city centre significantly and alter the skyline and profile of the site inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2004" and "that the redevelopment scheme will fragment and isolate the different dock areas visually" (Johnson, 2012; UNESCO World Heritage Committee, 2012). The issue of the relative importance of WHS status and the Liverpool Waters scheme to the city soon became politicised. The elected Labour Party Mayor of Liverpool Joe Anderson was quoted in the local press as saying that: "Turning Peel Holdings (the developer) away doesn't say to the world that Liverpool is a thriving modern city. It says we're a city that is stuck in the past" (Liverpool Echo, 2012). He also contrasted his view with that of the local opposition Liberal Democrat Party who he claimed: "would turn away 20,000 jobs and £5bn of regeneration, all for the sake of a certificate on the wall in the Town Hall" (Liverpool Echo, 2012). The Liberal Democrat leader argued in contrast that WHS status was "already paying off" with "hard evidence to show a lot of people come to the city because we have World Heritage Status", adding that "Tourism is one of our biggest industries and is bringing in cash now" whereas "Liverpool Waters is only a project with no guarantee of it proceeding" (Liverpool Echo, 2012).

The debate surrounding the Liverpool Waters scheme is striking in that it showcases a changing relationship between heritage and regeneration. Whilst heritage became a 'close friend' to the city when other sources of support, identity and image improvement were scarce, now the city is seen by many as having been reconnected to the economic mainstream and in a sense 'normalised', some policymakers and politicians perhaps perceive things like international heritage designations as something nice to have but no longer essential (just 'a certificate on the wall'). Yet the loss of UNESCO World Heritage Status would surely be a major and embarrassing blow to a city that has sought to reinvent itself around heritage and culture and used these attributes as levers in developing its visitor economy. Public statements by decision-makers which seem to posit an intrinsically antagonistic relationship between heritage protection and economic development, may also be counterproductive, not least as they might actually represent an oversimplified interpretation of the 'developer's view'. Perhaps this is beginning to be slowly recognised by major players in the city who have recently tried to present a more positive message in relation to the WHS and publically

recognise the benefits it brings to the city. A new book, celebrating Liverpool's WHS has recently been published with support from key local private and public sector organisations including Peel Holdings (Liverpool Waters, 2014). This private sector involvement raises interesting questions about the relationship between the UNESCO brand, regeneration and property-led investment.

10.2. The 'Welsh Streets'

As well as being the site of emblematic examples of heritage being employed as a component of wider regeneration strategies, Liverpool also reflects the trend of:

> […] heritage being utilised within regeneration schemes but, on the other hand, non-protected heritage being effaced and the wider character of the city being comprised. (Pendlebury and Strange, 2011, p. 379 [citing Booth, 2010 and Holyoak, 2010]).

Indeed in built environment terms 'an irony of Liverpool's recent regeneration narrative is that, whilst official literature and place marketing vaunt the distinctiveness of Liverpool's built heritage, many of the city's well designed inner suburbs continued to be subject to decay and removal in the name of regeneration' (Sykes *et al.*, 2013, p. 314). During the 2000s a major national programme called 'Housing Market Renewal' (HMR) was established with generous funding to 'renew' what were controversially deemed to be 'failing' housing markets in a number of areas (Nevin and Lee, 2003). The initiative focused largely on inner urban areas and combined demolition and rebuilding (usually at lower densities) with renovation of existing properties. In all £2.2 billion was spent by the initiative across nine areas of the English north and midlands (Finlay and Brown, 2011). In Merseyside, the programme covered Liverpool and the neighbouring areas of Wirral and Sefton. During the life of the initiative £333 million was spent on targeted intervention in local housing markets. The emptying and demolition of properties as part of this proved controversial and as in some other places in the north and midlands of England covered by the HMR initiative, there was strong resistance to clearance proposals from local residents and heritage groups (Allen, 2008; Allen and Crookes, 2009; Brown, 2005; Hines, 2010). In 2011 the programme was terminated half way through by a new national government leaving large areas of cleared land with no immediate prospects for redevelopment, something which campaigners against demolition had feared. A 'transition fund' was provided for the worst affected areas, but in Liverpool even this was earmarked for more demolition (Waddington, 2012). One of the most well-known cases of an area affected by the 'HMR' initiative is the so-called 'Welsh Streets' area in the southern part of inner Liverpool. This covers 8.45 hectares, less than a mile from the centre of Liverpool and close to Joseph Paxton's Grade II* registered Princes Park (1840). It consists of a grid of streets of terraced housing built in the 1870s, laid out and designed by the Welsh

architect Richard Owens and constructed by Welsh builders (Carr, 2014) (Fig. 4). The area also contains the house in which the Beatles drummer Richard Starkey (Ringo Starr) was born in Madryn Street which is a stopping point for many tourist tours (Fig. 5).

Fig. 4. Aerial View of part of the Welsh Streets Area, Liverpool
Source: SAVE (2014: 1)

Fig. 5. Tourists Visiting the House where Richard Starkey ('Ringo Starr') was born in 1940
Source: © www.sharethecity.org

The area has been designated for extensive demolition and redevelopment for over ten years with current proposals proposing the demolition of more than 400 Victorian terraced homes. Interestingly such extensive demolition was proposed though initial evidence showed that the unfitness level of properties in the Welsh Streets was 7%; the unfitness level in the adjacent Princes/Devonshire Road refurbishment area was 24%; that the Liverpool City average unfitness level was 8.6%; and, that the national average was 4% (Liverpool City Council, 2005, pp. 2–3). The clearance area thus had a level of unfitness that was *below* the city average and *significantly below* that of other adjoining areas to be retained (which have Conservation Area status). Based on data drawn from Liverpool City Council's own Neighbourhood Renewal Assessments, SAVE Britain's Heritage also note that 'The majority of the Welsh Streets were still inhabited until at least 2007, with high levels of resident satisfaction and low levels of property unfitness' (SAVE, 2014, p. 18) (Fig. 6). The Planning Inspector who presided over a Public Inquiry into the scheme in 2014 also concluded that 'There is *no doubt* that the 2005 designation of the area for demolition *contributed to the decline* of the Welsh Streets' (Thorby, 2014, p. 38: added *emphases*). Yet she argued too that the environmental, social and economic benefits of the proposed scheme "should be seen in the light of the existing very bleak environment of the Welsh Streets, which blights the whole area and is, and has been for many years, very damaging to the local area (Thorby, 2014, p. 46)[4].

Fig. 6. Occupied housing in Voelas Street, Welsh Streets, in 2006
Source: SAVE (2014: 22)

[4] If designation of the area for demolition undoubtedly contributed to the area's decline this might be seen as rather meekly resigning oneself to the dynamic of the self-fulfilling prophesy!

The Inspector finally recommended that planning permission be granted for the proposals concluding that 'The Welsh Streets are of low significance as non designated heritage assets, and their loss would be outweighed by the substantial benefits' and that though the setting of 'listed buildings would not be preserved, the adverse effects would be less than substantial and of a low order, and would be outweighed by the public benefits' (Thorby, 2014, p. 47). In January 2015 the Secretary of State (SoS) for Communities and Local Government rejected the Inspector's recommendation making clear 'his preference is for the refurbishment and upgrade of existing properties over demolition' (Sell, 2015). The SoS concluded that the scheme's benefits would not outweigh the harm to the area, including damage to heritage assets. Though the house where Ringo Starr was born was to have been saved after an earlier concession by the scheme's promoters, the SoS agreed with SAVE Britain's Heritage and the National Trust that 'the demolition of much of the rest of Madryn Street would significantly harm the ability to understand and appreciate this part of Liverpool's Beatles heritage' (DCLG, 2015, p. 3). He also felt that 'the design of the proposal is poor and fails to respond to local character, history and distinctiveness' (DCLG, 2015, p. 5). In terms of the benefits of the scheme, the SoS recognised that it 'would provide some benefits in terms of widening the choice of housing types, including accessible homes and the larger family housing which is in demand in Liverpool' (DCLG, 2015, p. 7), but was not persuaded that 'all forms of market testing and options involving more refurbishment have been exhausted' and he considers that 'potential schemes that incorporate more refurbishment would also achieve most of the benefits' (DCLG, 2015, p. 6).

As the Welsh Streets are non-designated heritage the case has been seen as having implications for how heritage value is assessed by decision-makers. The SoS noted, for example, that he attached:

> […] substantial weight to the harm the proposed development would cause to the significance of the Welsh Streets as a non designated heritage asset, and considerable importance and weight to the harm to the setting of the Princes Park conservation area and to the harm to the setting of listed buildings within it along Devonshire Road, which would not be preserved (DCLG, 2015, p. 8).

Reflecting on the decision Mascall (cited in Sell, 2015) notes that: 'You have to be aware that heritage can be much greater than the designated places and understand that the value that local communities may put on their buildings is regarded as increasingly important', whilst Seddon (cited in Sell, 2015) notes that the decision 'recognises that the inherited character of an area and the significance of all heritage assets need to be understood and can be worked with to help successful regeneration and good placemaking'.

As well as its significance for professional and policy interpretations of heritage and its management, the area has been notable for the extent to which different views of the proposals and the importance of heritage have been held by different sections of the local community, with an officially constituted residents

group backing the clearance and redevelopment proposals and an independent group campaigning for more properties to be retained and refurbished. The latter group has also sought to proactively develop alternative plans in a contemporary echo of Davidoff's (1965) plural planning model.

The case also clearly illustrates the contested nature of processes of heritage protection. In debates around the proposals, supporters of demolition have often argued that those who wish to preserve the existing houses are 'outsiders' who do not live in the area but are bringing their definitions and values about heritage to bear upon it. The anger at outside interference is also echoed by some politicians including the city's mayor who following the 2014 Public Inquiry, was quoted as saying the SoS's decision not to accept the Inspector's recommendation to grant planning permission for the demolition and rebuilding of the area was 'absolutely appalling and smacks of the very worst type of political interference from Whitehall'[5] (Murphy, 2015a). Invoking the legitimacy of 'proximity to the territory' he also called on the SoS to 'see for himself the state of the Welsh Streets' (Murphy, 2015b). Some residents supporting the official plans have also sought to effectively 'other' local residents who have opposed demolition and called for more refurbishment, arguing for example, in a letter to a national newspaper that 'A small, but vocal, minority of residents said that they wished to protect their "lovely Victorian homes" – but very few of them are long-standing residents or indeed Liverpool born' (Guardian Newspaper, 24/11/05).[6] There is thus contestation surrounding whose 'story' is most legitimate and a divisive narrative of 'insiders' versus 'interfering outsiders' has developed (Fig. 7).

The case of the Welsh Streets and the other controversial demolitions proposed by the HMR initiative are also significant because of how they exposed different views and definitions of what constitutes valued heritage in the built environment. In particular they revealed the vastly different representations which are associated with the traditional English terraced house – the domestic vernacular of the English industrial city. Regardless of the *physical* condition of individual examples, or ensembles, of such properties they were often represented in cases for demolition as being over-abundant in supply and/or intrinsically ill-suited to meeting contemporary housing needs and aspirations. In the words of some heritage campaigners 'The classic English terraced house was demonised as "obsolete"' and 'Whole neighbourhoods were declared surplus

[5] 'Whitehall' is shorthand for central government in colloquial English.

[6] Faced with a difficult and at times hostile context local residents who have resisted the demolition proposals have sought out coverage in the national and international media and solicited support from campaign groups like SAVE Britain's Heritage. As a result they managed to secure concessions in terms of slightly less demolition including the retention of some of their own homes, Ringo Starr's birthplace and part of Madryn Street on which it stands. In light of these and after enduring a decade of delay and decay the main anti-demolition group did not object to the revised plans for the area in 2014, though at the Public Inquiry they still presented alternative 'less demolition' options.

at the keystroke of a consultant's lap-top' (Brown, 2011, p. 1). Local residents' and heritage campaigners' representations by contrast presented such houses as being presently adequate, or potentially adaptable, to meeting ongoing housing needs and aspirations, and as being important witnesses to key moments in Britain's evolution into the first industrial state.

Fig. 7. Heritage Becomes Politicised: the (then) future UK Prime Minister visits the Welsh Streets in 2006

Source: SAVE (2014, p. 16)

11. CONCLUSION

There has been a general widening of the definition of heritage in England which is in-keeping with more general international and European developments. Heritage has thus been interpreted and reinterpreted in an evolving process. Protection and conservation of heritage has evolved from a concern with specific sites and structures whose value was determined by experts often in relation to national significance and foundational stories (Sandercock, 2003) to encompass wider urban ensembles and landscapes whose value is determined through a more open and diverse definitional process, more receptive to attributing value and significance to sites, structures and places associated with everyday life,

regional, local and distinct/minority cultures and groups. Whether shifts in conceptualisations 'in theory' and a number of non-statutory government publications have always been reflected as strongly in conservation and heritage management in practice is perhaps less certain.

Since the 1970s, heritage also came to assume an important role in urban policy and has been seen as a key component of wider strategies for renewal with a value that goes beyond its own intrinsic, symbolic, societal and cultural significance. The 'partnership' of regeneration, heritage, and culture-led regeneration which emerged strongly in the 1980s and 1990s reflected this. Physical, economic, social and environmental regeneration has thus often involved interest and/or intervention in and valorisation of the historic fabric of cities. As Holmberg (2001, p. 57) notes: '"Regeneration" has often entailed an interest in the cultural and historic dimension of the urban landscape'. Regeneration discourse has also frequently sought to promote and (re)present urban places using markers such as 'heritage', 'creative' or 'cultural', often in an attempt to reposition and reimage/rebrand cities previously synonymous with urban decline.

Yet there have also been critiques of the 'heritage lobby' and 'heritage industry'. For some commentators, the 'Heritage Industry' contributes to commodification of places, a death of authenticity, and museumification (Debary, 2004), whilst for others the 'Heritage Lobby' and conservation legislation can act as impediments to growth and/or the realisation of necessary interventions in the physical and social fabric of cities. Pendlebury and Strange (2011, p. 385) have even talked of a certain marginalisation process, noting that though the importance of the conservation of the historic environment to regeneration was widely recognised in the 1980s and 1990s, since the 2000s conservation of the historic environment has not been as central to the 'discourse of urban regeneration/renaissance' and 'place making' and did not move quickly to demonstrate its relevance to the sustainability agenda, notably as regards social inclusion and the promotion of a lower carbon society.

The experience of Liverpool reflects the wider trends outlined above providing both an 'extreme' and 'typical' case (Denscombe, 2007, p. 40) of regeneration and conservation. The city has been a site of both regeneration policy experimentation and conservation challenges/successes, characterised by emblematic conservation battles but also by the promotion of heritage and culture as strategic policy options (Phelps *et al*., 2001). Following the severe economic crisis of the 1970s the city sought to valorise. Heritage and culture as a means of developing its visitor economy. A wide definition of heritage has been adopted as reflected in representations of the city and the narration of its history in settings such as the city's museums and cultural events. The two controversial planning episodes discussed above relate to vastly different scales and types of development but both illustrate wider issues about definitions of heritage and historical significance; the ownership of the right to name things as heritage;

the protection afforded to designated and non-designated heritage assets; and, the balance between heritage protection and urban economic and social needs and transformation. The Liverpool Waters case relates to heritage assets protected by an international designation whereas the Welsh Streets case concerns non-designated heritage.[7] Both arguably reflect the apparent marginalisation of conservation in the face of economic and social agendas noted by Pendlebury and Strange (2011). Yet they might also be seen as reflective of other emerging tendencies in heritage protection and management. In the Welsh Streets a low carbon and sustainability agenda came to align with the arguments of heritage campaigners, with both being represented by proponents of the scheme as standing in the way of social and economic objectives.

In terms of processes, players, winners and losers, and conflicts related to heritage policies Liverpool therefore offers an instructive case. Public, private and civil society groups and citizens have been engaged in processes that associate heritage policies and regeneration for many decades. There has been major contestation around heritage policies including around 'classic' issues of 'whose' heritage is being protected, for 'whom' and what purposes. An 'insider – outsider' narrative has developed around many controversial episodes of heritage-related planning and development. The term 'heritage lobby' has entered the lexicon of some politicians, policymakers and residents to suggest that assemblages of 'outsiders', be they national (or indeed local) heritage groups, Beatles fans (in the case of the Welsh Streets), or ICOMOS delegations (in the case of Liverpool Waters) are seeking to impose their values and interpretations of heritage on the city. Questions of who defines what should be protected and who gains and who benefits from heritage protection thus course through many public debates on heritage in Liverpool. Controversies such as the Liverpool Waters scheme and the Welsh Streets have even become 'party politicised' at times. For example, the roles of the national Conservative-Liberal Coalition Government and the stand of the local Green Party against demolition in the Welsh streets were mentioned in campaign material from a Labour Party candidate in the 2015 general election.

The Liverpool case also illustrates the impacts of heritage policies on the city and in particular on public space. The overall influence of heritage policies on the spaces of the city has been mixed. Over the decades more and more areas of the city have received Conservation Area status and this has offered greater protection to some places. There were some very significant conservation battles from the 1970s onwards which resulted in notable successes and positive transformations; the saving and restoration of the Albert Dock being of crucial, even existential,

[7] With the case becoming a test of the extent to which non-designated assets are now protected following the Secretary of State's decision to attach 'substantial weight to the harm the proposed development would cause to the significance of the Welsh Streets as a non designated heritage asset' (DCLG, 2015, p. 8).

significance to the city. The city is ostensibly proud of its high number of listed buildings, a fact frequently cited in promotional material, but the protection even this status offers is mixed with some significant buildings having been lost or being under threat. The HMR programme of the 2000s also created tensions around heritage and, in not insignificant pockets of the city, spent millions of pounds to achieve far more abandonment and dereliction than that occasioned locally by the wider macro-economic downturn of the late 2000s. Overall, it is probably fair to say there is a general difference between the centre of the city and other areas and between attitudes of (local) decision makers to designated and non-designated heritage. But designation is no guarantee of protection and non-designated heritage may be saved, or given a stay of execution, by local action or central state intervention as in the case of the Welsh Streets. Finally, Liverpool provides a striking case of the positive relationships between economic change, regeneration and heritage policy. A question in a city like Liverpool is how far the relationship between heritage protection and economic growth can be sustained and transform as economic circumstances change.

Economic contexts and resources issues are also of wider relevance, notably the potential impacts of austerity and current cuts to local government budgets. As noted above, the widening understanding of what constitutes heritage and the role it can play have not always been accompanied by shifts in practice, which has sometimes remained more wedded to the core statutory tasks of conservation and heritage management. In a context where there have been '32% cuts in several local planning departments' this tendency may be reinforced due to resource and capacity constraints, with some feeling that 'the direct implication of reduced resources is a need to realign priorities and focus purely on core work or frontline, key services' (Senior Planner, North East Local Authority, 2013, cited in Ludwig and Ludwig, 2014, p. 252).[8] There is even anecdotal evidence that in some local governments the employment of specialist conservation officers is considered to be a luxury in a period of constrained budgets. Yet in other ways a period of less abundant resources may reduce pressures and threats to some historic environments as with the abandonment of the demolition component of the HMR programme. This survey of heritage and its conservation and management in England and Liverpool has outlined how definitions and practices have evolved in response to changing historical conditions. The extent to which the heritage sector is able to sustain the expansive role attributed to it in policy and theory rather than the narrow role it is often constrained to playing in practice, and how far it can demonstrate synergies with, and value to, wider place-based policy agendas, will be key questions in the field over coming years.

[8] In England local government relies overwhelmingly on central government funding which has been cut significantly in recent years (by 26% in revenue terms and 45% in capital terms from 2010−2015) (Clarke and Cochraine, 2013).

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