

Announcement of the second award of an ISUF Bursary for evaluating the use of urban morphology in practice

This award has been made to Kayleigh Hancox, a recent graduate of Northumbria University, for an evaluation of the South Jesmond Conservation Area in Newcastle upon Tyne, UK. She will be supervised by Dr Michael Barke, Reader in Human Geography at Northumbria University.

The proposed study area was designated as a Conservation Area in 1987. In the early 2000s a detailed rationale and description of the area was produced with the publication and approval of the South Jesmond Conservation Area Character Statement (Newcastle City Council, 2001, 2007). It is in this more recent Character Statement that implicit urban morphological principles can be found. Although there is no explicit requirement that the Character Statement for any Conservation Area should contain or even recognize specific 'urban morphological' principles, it is clear that in the case of South Jesmond and the sections dealing with the area's special character and appearance, several such principles were implicit, even if not recognized as such.

The Conservation Area forms a compact area of late-Victorian/Edwardian villas and open spaces (Barke, 2004). The area is under pressure from two particular sources: (1) its relative proximity to the city centre and easy transport access to the east of the city, which has brought about significant conversion from substantial town houses to commercial office property and other uses such as hotels; (2) the presence of a substantial student population in much of the rest of the Jesmond area, which has produced a 'spill-over' effect into South Jesmond with pressures for conversion for multi-occupation. In addition the survival of a number of large villa-type properties standing in substantial grounds has led to considerable intensification of ground space occupancy. These, and other pressures, create a situation where the implicit recognition of the desirability of a continuing existence of an inherited morphological structure which produces a distinctive character and appearance is under considerable threat. This project is concerned with attempting to assess the extent to which these morphological principles are being recognized and defended in the management of the Conservation Area.

The proposal will involve producing a database of all planning applications and responses within this area from the 1970s to the present to evaluate the extent to which urban morphological principles - implicit within the CA designation and certainly within the Character Statement - are being adhered to in response to the pressures identified above. The Conservation Area is relatively small and it is intended to produce a detailed planning history for each plot within it. Some specific time points are seen as being potentially pivotal, one being the declaration of the Conservation Area in 1987, others being the production of the Character Statement in 2000 and its later revision in 2007. Planning applications within the area are available on-line back to 1972.

A second stage of the research will involve carrying out interviews with the relevant Newcastle upon Tyne Planning and Conservation Officers in relation to (a) the original designation of the area, (b) the production and influences upon the Character Statement and its revision, and (c) the continuing management issues and problems as they relate to morphological principles inherent in the Character Statement.

The timescale envisages a late summer/ early autumn 2013 start, the production of a report to the ISUF Council by January 2014 and a probable presentation at the Oporto Conference in July 2014.

References

- Barke, M. (2004) *Field Seminar: Fringe-belt modification and change and development in north-east Newcastle*, Post IGC Congress Symposium in Urban Morphology, Newcastle upon Tyne.
- Newcastle City Council (2001) *South Jesmond Conservation Area Character Statement*, Newcastle upon Tyne.
- Newcastle City Council (2007) *South Jesmond Conservation Area Character Statement*, Revised March 2007, Newcastle upon Tyne.