

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE		
DATE:	21 NOVEMBER 2018	AGENDA ITEM:	9
TITLE:	DRAFT ST PETERS CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR PAGE	PORTFOLIO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT
SERVICE:	PLANNING	WARDS:	ALL
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The St Peters Conservation Area was designated in 1988 under the Town & Country Planning Act 1971 (as amended) and a full conservation area appraisal was adopted in 2009. Following discussions over the Council's approach to the historic environment, the Council agreed to support the setting up of a Reading Conservation Areas Advisory Committee (CAAC). One of the primary concerns of the CAAC was the long length of time since many conservation area appraisals had been prepared and adopted. According to best practice appraisals should be updated every 5-10 years and many of these appraisals are now in need of review. It was subsequently agreed that the CAAC would lead on reviews of conservation area appraisals in consultation with local communities.
- 1.2 The St Peters Conservation Area appraisal is the first review to be completed. This report seeks approval of the Draft St Peters Conservation Area Appraisal. Committee is asked to approve the revised appraisal for adoption.
- 1.3 Public consultation took place between 11 July and 14 September 2018. Appendix 1 contains a summary of comments received, as well as a response from the CAAC/CADRA with support from the Council. Appendix 2 contains a final draft.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Draft St Peters Conservation Area Appraisal be approved.**
- 2.2 That the Head of Planning, Development and Regulatory Services be authorised to make any minor amendments necessary to the Draft St Peters Conservation Area Appraisal in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport, prior to final publication.**

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the National Planning Policy Framework impose a duty on local planning authorities to review their existing conservation areas and designate as conservation areas any ‘special areas of architectural or historic interest’.**
- 3.2 Although not required by law, Historic England recommends that Conservation Area Appraisals are reviewed and updated regularly, every five to ten years. Conservation Area Appraisals are material considerations in the determination of relevant planning applications, and can form a key piece of evidence for the preparation of planning policy.**

4. THE PROPOSED ALTERATIONS

(a) Current Position

- 4.1 The original appraisal was prepared in 1987. It confirmed that the properties in this area were of sufficient character to merit being a conservation area. The Council approved the designation in 1988. In 2007, an extension to the boundary to include St Peters Avenue was considered and rejected. The most recent appraisal was completed in 2009 by consultants at Cirencester Conservation Studio.**
- 4.2 The existing boundaries of the conservation area (along with the now proposed boundary extension) are provided in the draft in Appendix 2. The proposed boundary changes have not been changed as a result of the consultation.**

(b) Proposed Option

- 4.3 The consultation has resulted in a recommendation that the extended boundaries of the Conservation Area be adopted to incorporate the Church Street Junction, Bridge Street and Caversham Bridge. The boundary adjustment aims to include the group of listed buildings at the junction of Church Road and Church Street which form the original core of the village of**

Caversham and which provide historically significant views upon entering Caversham. Caversham Bridge itself is central to the appreciation and significance of the history and character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The bridge includes Art Deco detailing with purpose-designed viewing places for pedestrians. There are several unlisted buildings of townscape merit within the proposed extension to the Conservation Area. These include three early 20th Century bank buildings at the Church Road and Church Street junction, the Crown Public House and the Priory Avenue Surgery, as well a pair of Victorian brick semis with original shopfronts (No 9 and 11) opposite the Griffin Public House.

- 4.4 Minor Extensions to the boundary along St Peters Hill and Church Road are also proposed, which seek to include the pavement on the far side of the road. On St Peters Hill, the extension includes trees which are important to views upward toward the curve of the hill. On Church Road the extension encompasses recently removed large trees in order to emphasise their replacement in order to screen adjacent modern apartments.
- 4.5 Consultation on the document was undertaken during July to September 2018 resulted in 63 representations made by organisations and individuals. Of these:
- 55 individuals expressed their support for the updated Appraisal, including the extension of the boundary;
 - 5 organisations reviewed the appraisal and decided that it was not necessary to comment;
 - 1 individual supported the update itself, but opposed the inclusion of the Bridge Street corridor; and
 - 2 representations suggested changes be made to the document before adoption.

A summary of these representations along with a response from the CAAC/CADRA and the Council are included at Appendix 1. There are no substantive changes to the draft Conservation Area Appraisal.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 Adoption of an updated appraisal and boundary extension will contribute to achieving the Council's priorities set out in the Corporate Plan through the protection and management of heritage assets that will contribute to "Keeping the town clean, safe, green and active" and "Providing infrastructure to support the economy". This updated appraisal with amended boundaries would ensure that the historical and architectural character is preserved and enhanced. It would also ensure that future development is appropriate to the character of the area and that development would not have a detrimental and therefore unsustainable impact.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

6.1 The Council's consultation process for planning policy, as set out in the adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI, adopted March 2014), is that the widest and most intensive community involvement should take place at the earliest possible stage, to allow the community a genuine chance to influence the document. Although the SCI deals mainly with development plan documents, the general principles are useful for documents such as a Conservation Area Appraisal. Community involvement exercises have been undertaken by the Conservation Area Advisory Committee and the Caversham and District Residents Association as part of undertaking the review. Details of community involvement and the consultations in 2016 and 2017 are set out in pages 39-44 (Appendix 1 & 2) of the appraisal document. These included:

- a guided walk around the area in July 2016, during which some 28 attendees were able to ask questions and give feedback for the review;
- initial conclusions and the proposed extensions shared at the St Peter's Church Fete in July 2017;
- another walk of the area held over Heritage Open Days 2017 which again included opportunity for comment; and
- local businesses affected by the proposed extension being leafleted.

6.2 A formal consultation led by the Council began in mid-July and lasted for a period of eight weeks (to allow for the summer holiday period) until mid-September. The draft St Peters Conservation Area Appraisal was made available online and in the Caversham Library and members of CADRA held a drop-in event at a local community fete to gather comments. Responses received are summarised in Appendix 1 and a final version of the document is in Appendix 2.

7. EQUALITY ASSESSMENT

7.1 It is not expected that there will be any significant adverse impacts on specific groups due to race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age or religious belief. An equality scoping assessment was included in the July SEPT Committee report.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The proposed extension to the conservation area, once agreed, will benefit from the controls set out within the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The legislation would control the demolition of buildings as well as ensure a closer control over new development in the area.

8.2 The following would apply:

- (a) In the exercise of planning powers the Secretary of State and planning authorities are under a duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving and enhancing the character or appearance of the area;
- (b) the demolition of certain buildings now requires specific Conservation Area consent;
- (c) “Permitted Development” rights are more restricted in Conservation Areas, and Article 4 Directions restricting “permitted development” rights in Conservation Areas do not (as is the case elsewhere) have to be referred to the Secretary of State for consent;
- (d) more controls exist in relation to works to any trees, not necessarily just TPO trees;
- (e) more exacting standards of advertisement control should be applied to advertisements in the Conservation Area, so long as the authorities are sensitive to the needs of businesses within the Conservation Area;
- (f) development proposals within conservation areas should either make a positive contribution to the preservation of the character or appearance of the area, or leave the character or appearance unharmed.

9 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Existing budgets are sufficient for the publication of the final documents and to notify occupiers affected.

Value for Money (VFM)

- 9.5 The preparation of an updated appraisal will ensure that developments are appropriate to the area, that significant effects are mitigated and that there are no harmful effects to the historic environment within the Conservation Area. Production of an updated appraisal is in line with best practice, therefore represents good value for money.

Risk Assessment

- 9.6 There are no direct financial risks associated with the report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- National Planning Policy Framework
- Planning Guidance - Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment
- Section 69, Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

APPENDIX 1: SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED DURING THE CONSULTATION

Representative	Summary of representation	CADRA/CAAC/ Council response
Canal & River Trust	The Canal & River Trust have considered the content of the document and have no comments to make at this time.	Noted.
Environment Agency	The consultation request falls outside of our remit and we have no further comments to make.	Noted.
Phil Gill	<p>My comments are only concerning the principle of extending the conservation area. I appreciate the benefits of the CA in protecting the historic environment, but this must be balance against the needs for development and improvement.</p> <p>The proposed extension to encompass Area C (the junction area) appears logical as the buildings there are good quality and are well-related to one another and to the rest of the CA. While I do not agree that it is necessary in principle to extend the CA, if there is such a desire then this area appears to be a sensible extension.</p> <p>I disagree with the incorporation of Area D (the Bridge St corridor). This area is a hotchpotch of buildings that, together or individually, contribute little to the Caversham centre and are of a different character to the rest of the CA. The block of the west side of Bridge St is of particular poor quality and largely unsuitable for occupancy. The inclusion of this area would detract from the rest of the CA. What Area D does offer is the opportunity for redevelopment to provide housing and business space, a high quality gateway to Caversham. Extension of the boundary may prevent this from happening.</p>	<p>This option was carefully considered when determining the proposed boundary extension. Arguments supporting the inclusion of Bridge St and Caversham Bridge are outlined throughout the document. The importance of Bridge Street as the visual corridor linking Caversham with the river outweighs the poor treatment of some of its buildings, which nevertheless have a consistent scale and style. Views from the bridge are central to the CA. Designation will help to prevent further deterioration. Gap sites within this area would greatly benefit from sympathetic redevelopment.</p>
Hermes Property Unit Trust	It is now proposed to designate the Church Rd and Church St area, despite the 2009 appraisal noting that this area was felt not to consistently contribute to the setting of the Conservation Area. Despite this earlier position, having reviewed the analysis contained in the draft, we do not wish to make comments on the proposed extension	While we recognise the value of improvements to St Martin's Centre, we do not believe a more detailed assessment of sites adjoining the CA

	<p>at this time. There is one area, however, where we feel the assessment and guidance contained in the draft could be amplified; namely, an enhanced articulation of the contribution made by the wider townscape setting to the significance of the CA in accordance with Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition): The Setting of Heritage Assets (2017). We agree that the setting of the CA is most sensitive (and contributes most strongly to the asset’s significance) towards the western end, particularly river views and the heavily-wooded ridge above the Thames. Views from Caversham Bridge especially contribute to the CA’s significance. By contrast, areas to the east of the CA are more variable in character. This area contains late 20th-century elements that do not positively contribute to the CA. The nearby post-1945 development, located to the east of the proposed CA, including St Martin’s Centre, is unrelated to the historic character or appearance of the CA. Moreover, planning permission has been granted to redevelop the Site, recognising that there is an opportunity to enhance the quality of the CA’s setting. In order to minimise ambiguity, clear identification of the relative contribution of elements in the CA’s setting in the appraisal would be of assistance. We request confirmation in the adopted appraisal that St Martin’s Centre in its current condition does not contribute positively to significance of the St Peters CA. This is inferred but not specifically stated. We suggest that paragraph 7.6 confirms that development within the setting of a CA can have a beneficial, neutral or adverse impact on its heritage significance and that all proposals should be informed by a proportionate understanding of the character or appearance of the CA. Paragraphs 5.2 and 7 should be revised to reflect more clearly, on a proportionate basis, the relative contribution made by the different elements of the townscape setting to the significance of the CA.</p>	<p>would make the appraisal more effective. Change proposed to add <i>“Care should be taken in respect of the height, massing and detailing of future development adjoining the Conservation Area.”</i></p>
Highways England	<p>We would be concerned with proposals that have the potential to impact the safe and efficient operation of the strategic road network, in this case the M4. We have</p>	<p>Noted.</p>

	reviewed this consultation and its supporting documentation and have no comments.	
Historic England	Our specialist staff have considered the information and we do not wish to offer any comments at this time. Applications should be determined in accordance with national and local policy guidance, and on the basis of your expert conservation advice.	Noted.
Natural England	Natural England does not have any specific comments on this conservation area appraisal.	Noted.
Bob O'Neill	May I ask if this extension is proposed to also cover the highest listed building in Reading, the Grade I listed Barn at Chazey Court at the end of the Warren? As you are aware, this building is on the At Risk register and has been treated appallingly by Reading's conservation and enforcement team who have failed for a decade to enforce important repair orders on the owners. They have also failed to consult properly with the listing agents to ensure that urgent action is taken.	While we recognise the poor state of the building and the urgent need for repairs, the Chazey Barn is approximately 1 mile from the western boundary of the CA and is outside of the scope for the appraisal.
Transport for London	TfL has no comments to make on the updated conservation area appraisal.	Noted.
A Costellot Abdul H Khan Alan Pennington Amanda Jan-Janin Andrea Warner Anna Beasley Anna Stevens Barbara Stuckey C Brown C Holvbowicz C M Rothwell Chris Greenway Clair Dreven Cllr Karen Rowland D Holvbowicz D J Holvobowicz D M G Pearce David Kenny David Moore David Nicholls David Tansley Deborah Ashton Diana Jones Elizabeth Dodsworth Elizabeth Killick Gabriel Freeman Glenn Rothwell	I wish to express my support for the updated St Peters Conservation Area Appraisal including the boundary extension.	Noted.

H Lambert Jane Eyre Jennifer Hermon Jessica Hottinger John Boucher John Brennen John Hodges Justine Pearce Lindsey McConnell Louise Tansley M G Pemble M Hermon M Jan-Janin Marie Irene Howard Mark Hiner Michael Smith Paul Dye Paul Freeman Peter Jones Rachel Kelliwell S J Bennett Severine Wilken Susan Alexander Susan Spires T A & P J Handford Thea Green V Jones		
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