

**CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN - Proposed updated
Westerham Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan**

Local Planning and Environment Advisory Committee - 27 January 2015

Report of Chief Planning Officer

Status: For Decision

Also considered by: Cabinet - 5 March 2015

Key Decision: No

This report supports the Key Aim of the Green and Healthy Environment theme of the Community Plan.

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Robert Piper

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Recommendation to the Local Planning & Environment Advisory Committee: That it be recommended to Cabinet that the updated Character Appraisal and Management Plan for Westerham Conservation Area be adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance

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Reason for recommendation. : It is considered that the updated character appraisal and management plan for Westerham conservation area reflects the changing townscape in Westerham and will help local residents and other interested parties engage in the conservation and enhancement of the local historic environment

Introduction and Background

1. This report seeks Members' support for the adoption of the updated Westerham Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan as a Supplementary Planning Document.
2. People in the district place a high value on the quality of its landscape, historic character and open spaces according to the Sevenoaks District Sustainable Community Plan.
3. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 imposes a duty on local authorities to designate as conservation areas any 'areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.' Clear and concise appraisals of the character of conservation areas provide a sound basis for their designation and management

and will inform local development management proposals and provide a framework for the control of development. The same act also conveys a duty on the local authority to draw up and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas in their districts.

Updated Westerham Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan

4. The current Westerham Conservation Area Character Appraisal was carried out in 2003 and does not include a management plan. The former Character Appraisal also did not reflect the many recent additions and alterations to the area and it is important that the special interest of a conservation area is clearly and accurately articulated so that it is a useful and reliable document for development management decisions. Westerham is one of the district's largest settlements which has a conservation area at its core and is the last to have been recently updated. It was also considered to be important to incorporate a management plan to help support not only the Council's functions but also other bodies that are involved with the area. Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on local planning authorities to draw up and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas in their districts.
5. This Appraisal and Management Plan is based on best practice contained within the English Heritage guidance, "Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisals and Management". This guidance also states;
6. "1.17 Section 69(2) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires local authorities to carry out reviews 'from time to time' but there is no indication in law how often this might mean. Good practice is generally accepted to be every 5 years."
7. The Appraisal describes the character and qualities of the area as a whole, and has identified different character areas. When adopted as a supplementary planning document the Appraisal and Management Plan will be a material consideration in the determination of development proposals. This means that the all new development will be assessed against the character described within the Appraisal to ensure that it preserves or enhances the character of the area as required by Section 69 of the *Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990*. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is clear that local authorities can not prescribe architectural style but are encouraged to preserve local distinctiveness. The character appraisal describes the local distinctiveness.
8. The management plan considers ways that the character could be better protected and ways that change can be sensitively managed. This section looks in more detail at the other items which effect character like street furniture, signage and surface treatments. It also signposts appropriate good practice guidance produced by relevant bodies like English Heritage and CABE.

Procedure

9. There is no statutory duty to consult when preparing appraisals/ management plans but consultation has been carried out with residents, Westerham Town Council and Westerham Town Partnership in order to comply with the Council's

Statement of Community Involvement. In total there were 4 responses from local residents and for the most part they highlighted factual inaccuracies or omissions or were concerned with issues out of the remit of the consultation. Some small amendments have been made to the draft document in response to these consultations. The results of the consultation and the response are attached at Appendix A.

Key Implications

Financial

The production of the appraisal and management plan has been accommodated within existing budgets.

The cost of printing and map production has been allowed for in existing budgets.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

The Council has a statutory duty under the provisions of section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to designate and review conservation areas and is now required to produce Appraisals and Management Plans for each area.

The document is based on best practice contained in the English Heritage guidance and has involved local engagement. It is therefore considered to be a sound basis for the future conservation and management of the area.

Equality Impacts

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users

Conclusions

The Council has reviewed the historic and architectural character of Westerham Conservation Area and updated the Character Appraisal to include a Management Plan. The Management Plan will help the local community, developers, local authorities and development professionals engage in the conservation and enhancement of the local historic environment and secure the long term preservation of the character of the area as an important heritage asset.

Appendices

Appendix A – Response to public consultations

Appendix B – Draft Conservation Area - Appraisal and Management Plan, including maps

Background Papers:

[Conservation Principles- English Heritage 2008](#)

[Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management – English](#)

[Heritage 2011](#)

[Sevenoaks Core Strategy](#)

[National Planning Policy Framework 2012](#)

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