

## ENVIRONMENT SELECT COMMITTEE - 4 SEPTEMBER 2012

### LOCAL LISTING OF BUILDINGS OF HISTORIC OR ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST

Report of the: Community and Planning Services Director

Status: For Information

---

**Executive Summary: To review the feasibility of a producing a List of Locally Listed Buildings**

---

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

---

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Mrs. J. Davison

---

Head of Service Group Manager Planning - Alan Dyer

---

**Recommendation:** That Environment Select Committee note the report.

---

#### Background

- 1 This report seeks to advise Members on the current feasibility of preparing a Local List of Buildings of Architectural or Historic Interest.

#### Introduction & Policy Background

- 2 Until the introduction of the adopted Sevenoaks Core Strategy in February 2011, there was no formal requirement for the District Council to produce a list of locally buildings. The Core Strategy states in paragraph 5.1.2., that "*The Council aims to produce a List of Buildings of Local Architecture or Historic Interest during the Core Strategy period, to be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document*".
3. The Core Strategy period runs from 2011 to 2026. Therefore the Council aims to produce the list by 2026.
4. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) does not specifically refer to locally listed buildings. However such buildings would be classed as a Heritage Asset if a local list was created. Existing buildings of architectural or historic interest not currently listed are afforded some recognition as non designated heritage assets, which is a material consideration in assessing planning applications under the NPPF.

## Preparation of a Local List

4. There is no statutory basis for producing a List of Locally Listed Buildings but many Local Planning Authorities have produced such a list. English Heritage recommends their use as a tool in heritage protection. In addition unless an unlisted building is within the boundary of a Conservation Area there is no statutory protection from demolition, with the exception of dwellings, where a prior notification procedure applies. The Council then have the option to make an Article 4 Direction to prevent demolition.
5. The Council has at different times considered and started on the production of a Local List, even though there was no statutory requirement or development plan policy requiring their provision. The work has been carried out intermittently in the past. In 2001, over a thousand local buildings were initially picked up from historical records and by officers as potential candidates needing further work. The last work on producing a Local List was stopped in 2007 due to budgetary cut backs. There is also some old historical information available. The following sets out the existing sources available to the Council for possible candidates for a List of Buildings of Local Architectural or Historic Interest in Sevenoaks District:
  - a. Old Grade III buildings not upgraded post 1970, when Grade III was abolished;
  - b. Unlisted buildings in Conservation Areas. Identified as 'contributing to character' in Appraisals and CAMPs;
  - c. Buildings identified by a Consultant employed during the period 2005-2007, covering the parishes of Sevenoaks Town, Leigh, Penshurst, Riverhead and Dunton Green;
  - d. Buildings identified and noted by current and past Conservation Officers during the normal course of their work;
  - e. Buildings recommended by six Parish Councils following a letter sent in May 2011 by the outgoing chair of Environment Select Committee to all the Parish Council's not surveyed 2005-2007.
6. In May 2012, English Heritage produced a Best Practice Guide for Local Heritage Listings. It is aimed to assist Local Planning Authorities in the preparation and management of a local list. Should this Council wish to draw up a List of Local Architectural or Historic Interest, it should be carried out in accordance with this latest guidance. The criteria to be used in assessing buildings for inclusion in a Local List is based on age and integrity, historic and architectural interest, with particular local emphasis. All candidate buildings would need to be considered against these criteria and consistency applied across the District. Such candidate buildings might reasonably include structures such as war memorials, horse troughs, milestones, or

road signs.

7. So whilst it appears that the Council has a wealth of information on this matter, this needs some further explanation as to the current position of the Council on these matters and the extent of further works needed.
8. *a) Old Grade III Listed Buildings* – These buildings would need to be resurveyed, photographed, recorded and assessed against the new English Heritage guidance. It is possible in the past 40 years, that a number of buildings may have even been demolished or altered to such an extent that they no longer hold any architectural or historic interest.
9. *b) Contributing to character buildings on Conservation Area* - Resurvey buildings to ensure still worthy of retention. The majority of these should still be worthy candidates subject to meeting the new English Heritage guidance. However, in reality their planning status and weight will not significantly change between being within a Conservation Area or being on a Local List.
- 10 *c) 2005-07 consultants survey of Sevenoaks, Leigh, Penshurst, Dunton Green & Riverhead.* Reassess with the buildings identified against the new English Heritage guidance to ensure consistency across the board. Resurvey buildings to ensure worthy of retention. The cost of the surveys carried out by the consultant back in 2006 was between £4,000 to £6,000 per parish.
- 11 *d) These form a body of work dating from 2001.*
- 12 *e) Parish Council assistance* – In May 2011 the outgoing Chair of Environment Select Committee wrote to the remaining 25 Parish & Town Councils not covered by the 2005-07 surveys to invite suggestions for buildings to be included in the list and provide details of the building. Only 6 Parish or Town Council's responded to this request and the level of information provided differs. These buildings would still need to be investigated. In addition, there still remain 19 Parish & Town Council areas that need to be fully surveyed.
13. Once the survey work has been carried out, quality checking of the buildings and a consistence of approach still needs to be carried out as well. Then a Supplementary Planning Document will need to be produced, policies drawn up, public consultations carried out, representations responded to and the SPD progressed through the committee and cabinet, prior to the SPD being adopted.

#### Key Implications

14. Our District has a rich tapestry of 41 conservation areas and over 1,500 local buildings. The extent of high quality local buildings of architectural or historic merit is

just as great and our initial estimates indicate that the number of potential local listed buildings would number around 1500, if not more.

15. Whilst the Council has quite an extensive records on potential local buildings, the level of information provided, the date when collated and extent of coverage vary tremendously, which leaves rather a mishmash of records of varying quality. Add in the recent guidance from English Heritage and the need to meet best practice, all existing buildings and records would need to be resurveyed and reassessed. This would involve an extensive amount of work, time and resources beyond those currently available to the Conservation function.

### Staffing

16. The Council currently has one full time Conservation Officer, who is engaged in providing advice formally on Listed Building and planning applications, providing pre application advice and guidance on listed buildings, as well continuing the review of the existing Conservation Area Appraisals.
17. There is no spare capacity for the Conservation Officer to carry out work towards a local list, even if work on the up and coming reviews of Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plans were put on hold, given the magnitude of the work involved.
18. The nature of the work requires a suitably qualified and experienced person to be engaged full time on the project.

### Financial

19. There is currently no identified budget, resources or staffing within the Conservation function to carry out such a project. Members may recall within the past two years, the number of conservation officers has been reduced and the conservation consultants' budget deleted due to budgetary cut backs.
20. The cost of the just the survey work of the 5 town and parishes done on 2006 was between £4,000 to £6,000 per parish. Given there are further 25 parishes, the cost to survey these based on 2006 figures would be over £100,000.
21. Whilst 6 of the 25 parishes have assisted in identifying a number of buildings that could be added, surveys of these buildings would still be required. There are still 19 parishes that did not reply to the request and would need to be fully surveyed.
22. I have not sought current costs from potential consultants at this stage, but I consider that the cost to produce such a local list by an external consultant, given our rich heritage would be likely to exceed £100,000.

## Conclusions

23. Whilst it would certainly be desirable to commence work on the production of a local list in the near future, the Conservation function does not have the funds, resources or staffing capacity to carry out such an extensive project at this point in time.
24. The aim is produce a local list during the plan period up to 2026. In the current budgetary situation, there is no likelihood of substantial additional funding being available in the next few years to support this project. Therefore in the medium term, discussions surrounding the Conservation function budget should aim to identify funds, resources or staffing to help achieve this worthy project.

## Sources of Information

English Heritage Best Practice Guide for Local Heritage Listing 2012

National Planning Policy Framework 2012

Sevenoaks Core Strategy 2011

Contact Officer(s):

Aaron Hill/ Nicole Twort

**KRISTEN PATERSON  
COMMUNITY AND PLANNING SERVICES DIRECTOR**