

UPDATE ON THE DESIGN AND CONSERVATION TEAM

Development & Conservation Advisory Committee - 10 March 2020

Report of Chief Officer Planning and Regulatory Services

Status For consideration

Key Decision No

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Julia Thornton

Contact Officer Rebecca Lamb, Ext. 7334

Recommendation to Development & Conservation Advisory Committee:

To consider an update on the activities of the Design and Conservation Team

Reason for recommendation: To provide a briefing for Members of the Development and Conservation Advisory Committee on the recent activities of the Design and Conservation function.

Introduction and Background

- 1 The Design and Conservation Team support the provision of good quality professional advice relating to design and conservation matters for the Council. They are located within the Planning Services Department under the Strategic Planning Manager.
- 2 Last year the Team expanded from a Conservation Team into a Design and Conservation Team with the successful recruitment, via the Public Practice programme, of Amanda Gregor as an Urban Designer. Amanda was recruited on a one year contract which has now been extended for another year. Amanda joins a team of two part time Conservation Officers, an Assistant Conservation Officer and the Design and Conservation Team Leader.
- 3 Aside from providing specialist input into the development management process via commenting on planning applications and pre-applications the team also lead the development of Council policy on Design and the Historic Environment.

Conservation Area Appraisal updates

- 4 Legislation requires local planning authorities to keep their conservation area appraisals up to date, although does not specify a timeframe for this. It is important that the appraisals accurately reflects the character of the conservation area because they are Supplementary Planning Documents

(SPDs) they are therefore a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

- 5 In 2018 we began the process of reviewing some of the oldest appraisals and last year Cabinet adopted the updated Conservation Appraisals for Shoreham (including Mill Lane) Swanley Village, Leigh, Seal, and Brasted High Street.
- 6 Conservation Areas are selected for review based on the number of planning applications and the age of the appraisal. It is intended that the next round of Conservation Area Appraisal updates that will be carried out will be:
 - Farningham (2003)
 - Eynsford (2003)
 - Kemsing (2003)
- 7 It is also proposed that a new Conservation Area be designated in New Ash Green. A recent report by the Twentieth Century Society recommended that the original core be designated and this is in line with the conclusions of our own evidence based document for the Local Plan, the Historic Environment Review.

Local List Article 4 Directions

- 8 Along with the Legal Services team we are applying Article 4 Directions to remove the permitted development rights relating to the demolition of Local Listed buildings as per Cabinet's decision from 2018.

Policy Documents

- 9 The Team are developing the following Supplementary Planning Documents;
 - Edenbridge Character Area Assessment - As part of the Neighbourhood Plan process and in accordance with SP1 of the Core Strategy, this document is being produced in conjunction with Edenbridge Town Council and is due to go out to public consultation at the end of March.
 - District-wide characterisation study - This report will look at the overall general character of the district and can be used as a tool to enhance and promote positive development, which is responsive and suited to the local character.

Design Review Panel

- 10 In conjunction with Design South East, the Team has written an SPD for the formal creation of a Design Review Panel to be included within the development management process. The SPD sets out the criteria and structure of the Design Review Panel (DRP). The DRP consists of design experts with different specialisms who appraise proposals via a presentation

by the applicants' team. This is a positive process to ensure that Sevenoaks District Council are delivering good quality development schemes.

Planning Officer Training Programme

11 This year we have delivered four training courses for planning officers on aspects of design. This supports the embedding of good design culture within the general development management process. The courses delivered were;

- Context and Character
- Site context and connectivity
- Active Travel
- Accessibility

Key Implications

Financial

None directly arising from this report.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

None directly arising from this report.

Equality Assessment

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 Design and Conservation Team have expanded their remit to include general design and have delivered some important projects in both areas. This work will be built on in the forthcoming year to ensure the continued delivery of good quality specialist advice and documentation within Planning Services.

Appendices

None

Background Papers

None

Richard Morris
Chief Officer - Planning & Regulatory Services