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PLANNING POLICY AND LOCAL PLAN COMMITTEE

10 OCTOBER 2022

REPORT OF THE ACTING DIRECTOR (PLANNING)

A.2. CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLANS (Report prepared by William Fuller)

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT
To report to Planning Policy and Local Plan Committee the third set of two ‘Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plans’ prepared for the Council by Essex Place Services, and for the Committee to agree a recommendation to Cabinet that they be published for consultation.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
<p>As Members will recall, the second five Conservation Area Appraisals were considered at this Committee on 11th May 2022 where a decision was made to progress these appraisals to Cabinet and then to public consultation. Those second five Conservation Area Appraisals were; Harwich Old Town, Manningtree and Mistley, Frinton and Walton, Brightlingsea and Great Bentley.</p> <p>This report asks Members to consider the next two Conservation Area Appraisals. These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Great Oakley Conservation Area, and,• Kirby-le-Soken Conservation Area, <p>The Committee is asked to consider these and to agree a recommendation to Cabinet to publish them for consultation.</p>
RECOMMENDATIONS
<p>That the Planning Policy and Local Plan Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. endorses the new Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plans for Great Oakley (Appendix 1) and Kirby-le-Soken (Appendix 2) Conservation Area;2. recommends to Cabinet that the above documents (forming Appendices 1 and 2) be published for consultation with the public and other interested parties; and3. notes that Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plans for the District’s other un-reviewed Conservation Areas will be brought before the Committee in due course over the next 6 months.

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PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

DELIVERING PRIORITIES

The Conservation Area Appraisals will support the Corporate Plan 2020-24 (aligned with the core themes of Tending4Growth and Community Leadership) through delivery of interventions aimed at:

- Delivering High Quality Services
- Community Leadership Through Partnerships
- Building Sustainable Communities for the Future
- Strong Finances and Governance
- A Growing and Inclusive Economy

RESOURCES AND RISK

Resources: TDC Officers are leading on this project with the input of Essex County Council Place Services under a service level agreement.

Adoption of the Conservation Area Appraisals will assist in attracting external funding for heritage related activity in the District. Potential sources of funding include:

- National Heritage Lottery Fund
- Section 106 Agreements
- Partnership Schemes in Conservation Areas with Historic England

Risks: The adoption of the Conservation Area Appraisals supports the Council's duties to maintain and enhance heritage assets and so reduces the risk of the district's heritage assets being diminished or lost.

LEGAL

National Planning Policy Framework (February 2019), paragraph 185 states:

Plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. This strategy should take into account:

- (a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- (b) the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;
- (c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and
- (d) Opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.

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Consideration of any legal implications of actions proposed in the strategy will be needed in due course.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Crime and Disorder: Heritage assets are, unfortunately, vulnerable to crime. Having a strategy for promoting heritage assets in the district should contribute positively to their maintenance.

Equality and Diversity: The recommendations in this report are aimed at benefitting all who live, shop, work and visit the District.

Health Inequalities: There is a growing wealth of evidence that demonstrates the role heritage plays in improving mental wellbeing and physical health. People who visit heritage sites reported higher life satisfaction and happiness scores, as well as lower anxiety (Department for Culture Media and Sport 2015). Across Essex there are a number of schemes and organisations to encourage and support healthy activity, such as Active Essex and Healthy Life Essex. Tendring's heritage provides a positive platform to encourage people to enjoy the outdoors and take positive steps for their personal health and wellbeing. Heritage Trails, for example, are already established in Harwich and Dovercourt, Frinton-on-Sea, Clacton- on-Sea, Jaywick Sands and Walton- on-the-Naze, they encourage walkers to take routes through the historic environment. Promoting these to new groups and partnering with healthy organisations can open heritage to new audiences and increase wellbeing.

Area or Ward affected: All, with a focus on those where Conservation Areas are being reassessed.

Consultation/Public Engagement: Members will recall that it was agreed at the October 2021 Committee meeting to send the first five Conservation Area Appraisals to public consultation. That public consultation took place over the summer and the results of which are being collated and analysed by Place Services and Council Offices.

The second set of Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans are due to go out to public consultation at the end of September for a period of six weeks. The third set of Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans (attached at Appendix 1 and 2) will be consulted on toward the end of the year for a period of no less than six weeks.

PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

Members will recall that the Council's Heritage Strategy was considered by the Local Plan and Planning Policy Committee on 29th October 2019. At that meeting it was resolved that the Committee noted the Strategy and comments made by Members at the meeting.

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On the 20th March 2020 Cabinet agreed to formally adopt the Council's Heritage Strategy. This Strategy contained a number of actions which were envisaged to be carried out by the Council and its partners throughout the lifetime of the Strategy. Two of these actions were for Officers to update Conservation Area Appraisals and prepare a 'Local List' of non-designated heritage assets within the District.

After identifying the first five Conservation Areas to be assessed in October 2021, Members then agreed the second set of Appraisals in May of this year. Members are now presented with the next two draft Conservation Area Appraisals, these are:

- Great Oakley Conservation Area, and,
- Kirby-le-Soken Conservation Area,

Officers intend to review all of the Council's Conservation Areas and the next set have already been commissioned from Place Services. These will follow in due course.

CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISALS

Each of the Conservation Area Appraisals share a broadly similar structure. At the start of each Appraisal a section detailing the context and general character of the Conservation Area and the evolution of the Conservation Area is given.

The following areas of assessment are specific to each Conservation Area so have their own section headings.

Alterations To Boundaries

After a detailed assessment, the boundary of the Great Oakley Conservation Area will remain unchanged.

For Kirby-le-Soken minor changes to the boundary are recommended.

Additions: The Conservation Area boundary should include the gardens of the properties within the Conservation Area. They form the domestic curtilage and contribute to our understanding of land use, layout and an indication of the area's development.

It is recommended to include the Oxborrows Yard, Maltings Lane. The site has historically been a service yard as noted on the Tithe Apportionment (1841). Therefore, it is considered to contribute to the Conservation Area's historic development and character. The site was formerly occupied by Oxborrow Engineering but at the time of the assessment was vacant. The Oxborrow Family, Blacksmiths and Engineers, have a long-standing association with Kirby-le-Soken and Tendring dating from 1812. The early nineteenth century forge was demolished for residential development in 2004. The property is visible from within the Conservation Area and is an attractive nineteenth century industrial building, unique within the area, contributing to local character and appearance.

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Reductions: It is proposed to remove the back land development behind Number 44-64 as it undermines, and is inconsistent, with the historic grain of development. The development is of a low scale, however, it is visible in the skygaps between the properties fronting The Street; this detracts from appreciation of Kirby-le-Soken as an isolated settlement. The quality of the development does not positively respond to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Designated Heritage Assets

The appraisals make note of the listed buildings, scheduled monuments and registered parks and gardens in each Conservation Area.

Proposed Non-designated heritage assets

These buildings have been identified as they are either considered to be good examples of their type or architectural style, are prominent local landmarks, demonstrate use of local materials or design features, or are connected to local historical events, activities or people, and are all relatively complete in their survival.

At Great Oakley

- The Three Cups, High Street
- Mill House Cottages (2 – 5 High Street)
- Cambria House, High Street
- Apple Tree Cottage and No. 2, High Street
- Pillbox outside Apple Tree Cottage, High Street
- Romaric, Queen Street
- The Maybush Inn, Farm Road

For Kirby-le-Soken

Number 57, The Street is a one and a half storey weatherboarded dwelling with a slate roof (Figure 35). The property sits perpendicular to the road, gable ended with decorative barge boards and a finial painted white. There is a single storey porch entrance to the east elevation and a lean to on the west elevation, both covered in red clay pantiles. There is a slender red brick chimney to the rear. The small scale and attractive detailing make it a noticeable dwelling within the streetscene. The property does have a larger modern extension to the rear, however, this does not visibly detract from the original scale and historic core of the property.

Waterloo House (Number 34, The Street) is a large, detached and double piled dwelling of two-storeys and rendered elevation. The frontmost pile sits under a slate roof and the rear is covered in red clay tiles. It is one of the larger dwellings running parallel to The Street, making it a visually prominent within the streetscene. The single storey outbuilding to the west of the property is present of the first edition Ordnance Survey map (1897) and may be contemporary with the principal dwelling. The first floor has six over six sash windows; the windows to the ground floor windows and central entrance appear to be modern alterations.

Heritage at Risk

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Neither of the Conservation Areas contrail buildings or structures at risk. The Conservation Areas themselves are also not at risk.

Archaeology

Throughout these Conservation Areas there is the potential for a multitude of below-ground heritage assets yet to be discovered. In general the appraisals promote a cautious approach to development which might disturb or destroy these assets.

Assessment of significance

A detailed assessment of significance of each of the Conservation Areas is then presented. Many of the Conservation Areas are split into distinct character areas. Each assessment considers the following features:

- Layout
- Building materials and boundary treatments
- Listed buildings and non-designated heritage assets
- Other buildings
- Landscaping and open spaces
- Views

Opportunities for Enhancement

This section of each appraisal identifies the issues facing the Conservation Areas which have been reviewed. A large number of the issues are common to all Conservation Areas, but where they are unique, that is also highlighted.

- Both of the Conservation Areas could benefit from enhancement to car parking including planting trees and a review of hard landscaping to ensure its historic appropriateness.
- For both areas, on-street parking detracts from the historic character of the Conservation Area.
- Kirby suffers from empty properties which can have a detrimental impact on the character of a place over time.
- Both Conservation Areas suffer from the loss of or inappropriate use of architectural detailing such as UPVC windows and doors, rainwater goods and external paintwork.
- In the Conservation Areas modern development usually resulted in a negative or neutral impact on the area as a whole.
- The Conservation Areas suffered from some poor maintenance of buildings

For Great Oakley a couple of specific issues were highlighted:

A number of buildings within the Conservation Area have been fitted with solar panels on their roofs, including several modern buildings at the eastern end of the High Street. While solar panels are an important element in the move towards sustainable energy sources, they are a modern intervention which can be visually intrusive, introducing large expanses of dark, reflective surfaces onto the traditional roofscape of the Conservation Area which are at odds with its vernacular character and appearance. Some traditional roofscapes, such as thatched roofs and those on listed buildings, are

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unsuitable for solar panels. Generally, solar panels should be confined to rear roof slopes or secondary roof pitches which face away from the main thoroughfares or placed on outbuildings, to reduce their impact on the character of the Conservation Area.

The Convenience Store at 9-10 High Street has suffered some unsympathetic alterations, most noticeably the overpainting of the red brick façade, leading to loss of historic detailing and lack of coherence with its neighbours. The large plastic signage blocks the lower part of one of the first floor windows, while the ground floor shop window is obscured with vinyl signage. These features detract from the character of the Conservation Area. Removal of the paint from the brickwork elevation, removal of the vinyl stickers and installation of a smaller painted timber sign would improve its appearance. This should be in line with the Essex County Council's Shopfront Guidance.

There was also an area-specific issue at Kirby-le-soken:

The Red Lion Public House has a large, tarmacked car park to the side stretching to Maltings Lane. The large expanse of hardstanding does have an urbanising effect, which detracts from the rural character and appearance of the Conservation Area. There is an opportunity to soften the appearance of the carpark through the addition of boxed planters or a gravel surface. Any changes to the carpark, however, should not undermine the openness of this section of the Conservation Area.

Management Proposals

As outlined above, there are a wide range of issues facing each of the Conservation Areas, many of which share common themes. This section recommends management proposals which address these issues in both the short and long term.

- The preparation a Local Heritage List of non-designated heritage assets is suggested for both Conservation Areas.
- The Council is encouraged to use its enforcement powers to prevent inappropriate development within both of the Conservation Areas.
- Joint working between different Council departments to promote public realm improvements is also suggested.
- The monitoring of trees and additions to tree planting within public open space is recommended.
- Publishing guidance for homeowners and businesses in Conservation Areas could help owners identify appropriate alterations to their properties within Conservation Areas.
- The timely renewal of these Conservation Area Appraisals could help to monitor change within the Conservation Areas more accurately.
- Wayfinding could help with legibility.

Funding Opportunities

- Heritage lottery fund
- S106 Agreements
- Partnership Schemes in Conservation Areas

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CONCLUSION

Taking into account the discussion had at this meeting, Members of the Planning Policy and Local Plan Committee are asked to recommend to Cabinet that the two Conservation Areas to be put to a six week public consultation.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Great Oakley Conservation Area Appraisal
Appendix 2 – Kirby-le-Soken Conservation Area Appraisal

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None