

## **Report to the Cabinet**

**Report reference:** C-012-2015/16

**Date of meeting:** 23 July 2015



**Epping Forest  
District Council**

**Portfolio:** Safer, Greener and Transport

**Subject:** Copped Hall Conservation Area Character Appraisal

**Responsible Officer:** Maria Kitts (01992 564358)

**Democratic Services Officer:** Gary Woodhall (01992 564470)

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### **Recommendations/Decisions Required:**

- (1) To approve the adoption and publication of the Character Appraisal for the Copped Hall Conservation Area; and**
- (2) To approve the boundary amendment to the Copped Hall Conservation Area.**

### **Executive Summary:**

By law Local Planning Authorities are required to determine areas of special architectural or historic interest and designate them as conservation areas. The LPA should also publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these areas. The proposals take the form of conservation area character appraisals which chart the history of an area, the reasons for its designation, and the key elements of its special interest. Character appraisals often precede management plans as they provide the knowledge and understanding required to inform the creation of a successful and meaningful management plan.

The character appraisal for the Copped Hall Conservation Area has been prepared following due process and is now ready to be adopted and published for use by the general public (particularly residents), the major stakeholders within the area (including the Copped Hall Trust and the City of London), the Council's Development Management Section, and any other interested parties. Once adopted, the document will become a material consideration in the planning process and will inform the decisions made relating to proposed developments within the conservation area.

As part of the appraisal process the adequacy of the conservation area boundary was assessed and it is intended to extend the boundary of the Copped Hall Conservation Area.

### **Reasons for Proposed Decision:**

Under the provisions of section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Local Planning Authorities are required to designate areas of 'special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. Section 71 of the same Act states that the Local Planning Authority has a duty to 'publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement' of their conservation areas. This takes the form of a conservation area character appraisal.

It is, therefore, a key statutory duty that these documents are published.

## **Other Options for Action:**

If the character appraisal is not published then the Council will not be fulfilling one of its statutory duties under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. In addition, the lack of a character appraisal could make planning decisions within these areas more difficult to defend at appeal.

## **Report:**

1. Work commenced on the appraisal in 2010 but, due to unforeseen and significant staffing changes, the final publication of the document has been substantially delayed. The original draft appraisal was produced in January 2011, with public consultation taking place between January and March 2011, including a public meeting on 31 January 2011. Comments and suggestions arising from the public consultation were incorporated into the document. Since this time, there have been no substantial changes to the document which would warrant full re-consultation.

2. The Forward Planning Team, along with the Conservation Officer, commissioned a Heritage Asset Review (HAR) in 2012 (completed in May 2012). The aim of the study was to review the suitability of the District's conservation areas and locally listed buildings, forming part of the evidence base for the new Local Plan. One of the recommendations arising from the HAR was to slightly extend the southern boundary of the conservation area to include land along Crown Hill. It was decided to carry this recommendation forward as it would incorporate good quality examples of estate architecture which contribute to the historic and architectural interest of the area; in addition, the extension rationalises this part of the conservation area boundary.

3. Residents of the conservation area, key stakeholders and other interested parties (including Waltham Abbey Town Council, Epping Upland Parish Council, Epping Town Council, the Copped Hall Trust, the City of London, and Epping Society) were notified of the proposed boundary amendment and invited to comment on the proposal in February 2015. The comments received were all positive and supportive of the boundary amendment.

4. A final draft has now been produced, which has not varied in content since the revisions following the 2011 public consultation, other than further information on the area to be included within the boundary and the updating of any superseded references. Key stakeholders (including the City of London and the Copped Hall Trust) were asked to confirm the factual content of the final document and correct any errors.

5. The appraisal explores the landscape setting, historical development, and architecture of the area in order to define the elements of special architectural and historic interest, and the general character of the area. These elements include:

- Its origins as a medieval hunting park and rural estate dating from the 12<sup>th</sup> century;
- Its associations with the former Abbey at Waltham Abbey and successive Tudor monarchs, nobility and gentry;
- Its development as a substantial 18<sup>th</sup> century country house mansion with extensive gardens and parkland;
- Its position within an area of ancient landscape linked to Epping Forest;
- Its development within the Purlieu of Epping Forest and the influence this has had on the estate's landscape;
- Its evolution to an impressive late Victorian/Edwardian mansion with its associated service outbuildings, model farm buildings and pleasure grounds;
- The quality and range of statutorily and locally listed buildings and other structures.
- The surviving elements and features of the designed landscape; and

- The rare survival of largely unaltered historic estate drives and network of access rights that have not been subsumed by the public highway network.

6. Following the discussion of the special interest and character of the area, the appraisal discusses opportunities for the enhancement and future protection of the area (for further information see page 45 of the background paper).

### Outcomes

7. If the publication of the appraisal is approved it will result in better management of the conservation area through the preservation of its special interest and character. The appraisal will be used to inform residents and developers on acceptable works within the conservation area, and those works which could cause harm to the character of the area. It will also inform decisions made by Development Control to ensure a consistent approach to the preservation and enhancement of the area.

8. Following approval, the appraisal will be published on the Council's website and a limited number of hard copies will be available from Planning Reception at the Civic Offices. Letters will be circulated to residents of the conservation areas and any other interested parties notifying them that the appraisal has been published and is available to view on the Council's website. The appraisals will be reviewed after five years.

9. As per the statutory requirements set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the extension to the boundary will be publicised in the local press and the London Gazette.

### **Resource Implications:**

Some officer time will be required to administer the printing and circulation of the documents, notification letters, and publication of statutory notices as well as any arising queries from members of the public. The Assistant Conservation Officer is a fixed term post until the end of 2015-16 and, therefore, has the capacity to deal with this workload.

### **Legal and Governance Implications:**

The statutory powers relevant to this decision are found within sections 69 and 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

### **Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:**

Improved understanding and protection of part of the District's historic environment.

### **Consultation Undertaken:**

Public consultation on the content of the appraisals and management plans was undertaken in January 2011 with all comments and suggestions taken into account and, where appropriate, incorporated into the documents. This process adheres to sections 71(2) and (3) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 which requires local planning authorities to allow the contents of an appraisal and management plan to be considered by the public, and their views taken into account.

Further consultation with key stakeholders took place as part of the wider HAR in April 2012, in which, along with all the District's conservation areas and locally listed buildings, comments on the adequacy of the conservation areas were invited and considered by the appointed consultants.

An additional period of consultation was carried out in February 2015 during which time residents and interested parties were notified of the intention to extend the conservation area boundary and asked to comment.

N.B. The appraisal document contains a section on 'Community Involvement' for further information.

**Background Papers:**

Copped Hall Conservation Area Character Appraisal (published as a background paper for this meeting).

**Impact Assessments:**

Risk Management

No risks identified.

## Due Regard Record

<b>Date / Name</b>	<b>Summary of equality analysis</b>
25/06/2015 Maria Kitts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The adoption and publication of the conservation area character appraisal will provide residents, and other interested members of the public, with information on the unique elements which contribute to the character and special interest of the area in which they live. It will also be used to inform planning decisions.</li><li>- The method of providing access to the document has been identified as a potential issue, although this can be overcome.</li><li>- In order to ensure this document is widely accessible to all, it will be available electronically on the EFDC website and in hard copy at the Civic Offices in Epping. A letter to each household within the conservation areas will notify residents of where and how they can view the document.</li><li>- Furthering local understanding of the history and special interest of the conservation area should strengthen the residents' sense of place and feelings of community.</li></ul>