

## **Report to the Cabinet**

**Report reference: C-069-2015/16**

**Date of meeting: 3 March 2016**



**Epping Forest  
District Council**

**Portfolio: Safer, Greener and Transport**

**Subject: Waltham Abbey Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan**

**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 and Management Plan for the Waltham Abbey Conservation Area; and**

**(2) To approve the boundary amendment to the Waltham Abbey Conservation Area.**

### **Executive Summary:**

By law Local Planning Authorities are required to designate conservation areas and, following these designations, proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these areas. The proposals take the form of conservation area management plans and it is considered best practice to accompany these management plans with 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 and management plan for the Waltham Abbey 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 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 suitability of the conservation area boundary was assessed and it is intended to remove two areas from the Waltham Abbey 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 and management plan.

It is, therefore, a key statutory duty that this document is 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 less consistent and more difficult to defend at appeal.

### **Report:**

1. Work commenced on the appraisal in 2014 and a draft version was the subject of a public consultation held between November 2015 and January 2016. This included a public exhibition held at Waltham Abbey Town Hall on 7 December 2015 where residents and other stakeholders could find out more about the appraisal process and how to comment on the draft version.

2. Residents, stakeholders, and interested parties were notified of the consultation period by letter, and posters and flyers were displayed in some locations within the conservation area. Hard copies of the draft appraisal were made available at the Civic Offices in Epping and several locations within Waltham Abbey town centre, in addition to its publication on the Council's website. People were encouraged to make comments either through a questionnaire (electronic or in paper form), or by email or letter.

3. All consultation responses have been taken into account and, where appropriate, have informed revisions to the appraisal. A final draft has now been produced.

4. The appraisal explores the landscape setting, historical development, archaeology, 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:

- The historic layout of the town;
- The Church of the Holy Cross and St Lawrence, Market Square and the linear development of Sun Street, featuring vestiges of medieval burghage plots, provide the main focal point for the area with several smaller streets, lanes and open spaces leading from them;
- The variety of architectural styles and ages;
- The range of traditional building materials including timber framing, brick and clay tile roofs;
- Distinctive historic architectural features;
- The medieval Church of the Holy Cross and St Lawrence, the abbey ruins and grounds which form a scheduled monument;
- The large number of trees, green spaces, and streams particularly in the Abbey Gardens; and
- The range of uses and levels of activity within the conservation area.

5. 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 which are set out as a management plan (for further information see pages 45-47 of Appendix 1).

6. The suitability of the conservation area boundary was reviewed as part of the

appraisal process and, as a result of this, it is intended to remove two areas from the conservation area boundary; an area to the west of Greenyard, and an area including parts of Sewardstone Road, Rue St Lawrence, and Farm Hill Road. The revision of the boundary to the west of Greenyard will see the exclusion of part of a car park and a late 20<sup>th</sup> century doctors' surgery from the conservation area. The revised boundary to the south east of the conservation area excludes the fuel station and depot along with buildings on Rue de St Lawrence as these buildings are not considered to be in keeping with the character of the rest of the area. It is also proposed to remove Thrift Hall and Thrift Cottage from the conservation area due to the position of the revised boundary, their detachment from the historic core of the town, and the strength of their existing statutory protection as listed buildings (Grade II).

### 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 the Civic Offices in Epping, the Waltham Abbey Tourist Information Centre, and Waltham Abbey Library. Letters will be circulated to residents of the conservation area and any other interested parties notifying them that the appraisal has been published and is available to view on the Council's website. The appraisal 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 revision 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 2017-18 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 plan was undertaken between November 2015 and January 2016 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.

N.B...The appraisal document contains a section on 'Community Involvement' for further information (page 42 of Appendix 1).

**Background Papers:**

Waltham Abbey Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan (Appendix 1).

**Risk Management:**

No risks identified.

# Due Regard Record

This page shows **which groups of people are affected** by the subject of this report. It sets out **how they are affected** and how any **unlawful discrimination** they experience can be eliminated. It also includes information about how **access to the service(s)** subject to this report can be improved for the different groups of people; and how they can be assisted to **understand each other better** as a result of the subject of this report.

S149 Equality Act 2010 requires that due regard must be paid to this information when considering the subject of this report.

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Date / Name	Summary of equality analysis
01/02/2015 Maria Kitts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The adoption and publication of the conservation area character appraisal and management plan 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, the Waltham Abbey Tourist Information Centre, and Waltham Abbey Library. 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>