

Report to District Development Control Committee

Date of meeting: 19th February 2014

Subject: Staples Road Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan



Officer contact for further information: Maria Kitts, ext. 4358
Committee Secretary: S Hill Ext 4249

Recommendation:

That the publication of the Character Appraisal and Management Plan for the Staples Road Conservation Area (Loughton) be approved

Background

1. Conservation areas are defined as areas of 'special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. They are designated under the provisions of section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Under section 71 of the same Act, 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.

Timescale

2. Work commenced on the appraisal in 2008 but, due to staffing changes, the final publication of the document has been substantially delayed. The original draft appraisal was prepared between May 2008 and September 2010, with public consultation taking place in September 2010, including a public meeting on 23rd September 2010. Comments and suggestions arising from the public consultation were incorporated into the document.

3. The Forward Planning Team, along with the Conservation Officer, commissioned a Heritage Asset Review 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. The boundary of the Staples Road Conservation Area was found to be adequate in terms of protecting the special architectural/historic character of the area and did not require any amendments or variations.

4. A final draft has now been produced, which has not varied in content since the 2010 public consultation, and has been proven to be adequate by the 2012 Heritage Asset Review.

Appraisal summary

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 are outlined below:

Elements of special architectural and historic interest

- Unaltered streetscape
- Contribution from noted architects
- Colour, texture and general appearance of traditional building materials used
- Architectural features which were innovative for their time, particularly on the schools
- Interesting historic events associated with the area, e.g. there are still traces of the use of the area in World War II
- Interesting uses for the buildings, e.g. no.3 Melbourne Cottage was used as a retreat house for poor children in the summer months
- Interesting historic people associated with the area, e.g. Robert Hunter, 19th century lexicographer, naturalist and missionary, and George Pearson, film producer

Factors contributing to the character of the conservation area

- The distinct forest edge environment with houses directly facing the forest across the lane
- Calm and quiet location (excluding school drop off and collection times)
- Unaltered streetscape
- Colour, texture and general appearance of traditional building materials used

6. Following the discussion of the special interest and character of the area, the appraisal sets out the Council's objectives for the preservation and enhancement of the conservation area over the next five years in the form of a Management Plan, as follows:

CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN

General management objectives to preserve and enhance the conservation area

1. Ensure that any new development is to a high standard and is sympathetic to the character and appearance of the conservation area in terms of scale, massing, style and materials.
2. Discourage the use of unsympathetic modern materials such as uPVC, untreated aluminium and concrete roof tiles.
3. Ensure that the clean and tidy environment expected in a conservation area is maintained.

Short term objectives for enhancement

4. Discuss with local community groups how we can inform new residents and businesses that their properties are in a conservation area and the responsibility that this entails.
5. Carry out an audit of street furniture with particular reference to repair or replacing where necessary.
6. Assess the current conservation area boundary and see if any alterations need to be made.

Medium term objectives for enhancement

7. Evaluate the visual impact and necessity of signage in the conservation area with a view to removing any unnecessary signs and replacing those necessary ones with more sympathetic alternatives.

Outcomes

7. If the publication of the appraisal is approved it will result in better management of the conservation area through the protection of its special interest and character. The appraisal will be used to inform homeowners 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 area and any other interested parties (including Loughton Town Council, Loughton Residents Association, Hills Amenity Society) notifying them that the appraisal has been published and is available to view on the Council's website.

9. The appraisal will be reviewed after five years.

The full Staples Road Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan is appended to this report.