

**Committee:** Cabinet

**Agenda Item**

**Date:** 2 August 2012

**16**

**Title:** Conservation Area Appraisal, Littlebury

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr S Barker

Key decision: **No**

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## Summary

1. This report has been prepared and discussed with Littlebury Parish Council who support its general content. The draft Conservation Area Appraisal for Littlebury was made available on the council's website and as printed copies. A public exhibition on 20 March 2012 was attended by officers who presented the findings and answered questions. This report summarises and comments on the representations made at the exhibition and subsequent to it in the consultation period which lasted from 9 March until 20 April 2012.
2. Littlebury Parish Council welcomed the Conservation Area Appraisal in principle and considered it a worthwhile document which is likely to strengthen the control of development. This comment is valuable and is one shared by officers. The experience of the Conservation Area Appraisals so far undertaken indicates that the process is both important and popular with the local communities.

## Recommendations

3. That the Conservation Area Appraisal be approved and used to assist in the process of determining planning applications and for implementing Management proposals.
4. That the Littlebury Conservation Area boundary be formally amended.

## Financial Implications

5. The recommendation would require the advertising of the boundary changes which would cost in the region of £500 - 600. This can be met from existing budgets for Conservation.

## Background Papers

6. The Littlebury Conservation Area Appraisal and Draft Management Proposal document together with notes of the public exhibition held on 20 March 2012 and all representations received.

## Impact

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Communication/Consultation	Full consultation undertaken.
Community Safety	Not affected
Equalities	Not affected

Finance	Advertising costs can be met from existing budgets. The document will be disseminated through the website.
Health and Safety	Not affected.
Human Rights/Legal Implications	Not affected
Sustainability	The report focuses on environmental issues seeking to preserve the environment of the respective communities, including their buildings and open spaces.
Ward-specific impacts	Littlebury - various proposals as amended and as contained in report.
Workforce/Workplace	Existing staff resources.

## Situation

8. The Littlebury Conservation Area was designated in 1977. The council has a duty within section 69 of the Listed Buildings and conservation Area Act 1990 to consider the designation of Conservation Areas and to undertake periodic reviews. As part of this work the Council has undertaken a number of Conservation Area Appraisals of existing areas. This is the first one to be reported to Cabinet for adoption.
9. This report sets out the key issues within the attached Conservation Area Appraisal and sets out the results of the consultation exercise and the changes proposed.
10. The principal issues and recommendations set out in the document are:

**Changes to the existing conservation area boundary.** A number of alterations to the conservation area boundary are proposed.

Inclusions:

(a) The area to the east of the Mill Race and King's Mill and bounded by Walden Road is an area of open space that is of historic interest. The importance of the tree cover to the south of this area is already acknowledged by the designation of several Tree Preservation Orders. Until the twentieth century the Walden Road ran out of the village from the ford by the Mill House traversing the meadow. Including this area will underline the role of the historic view and protect the open space on the edge of the village envelope.

Additionally a new conservation area is proposed to include Northend. The concentration of buildings of note, their interaction with the landscape on the approach to Littlebury and general quality contribute to an environment which is distinct from that of the historic core of the village.

Exclusions:

(a) The current inclusion of the 'D' shaped area at the field entrance off the Littlebury Green Road seems entirely arbitrary and its exclusion is suggested.

Note: As a result of the consultation, respondents, including Littlebury Parish Council, have identified further possible alternations and additions to the Conservation Area. These representations are included in the table below with appropriate officer comment.

**Planning Controls and Good Practice in Respect of Other Buildings that Make an Important Architectural or Historic Contribution.** A number of such unlisted buildings that make a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area have been identified. The council should seek to ensure that these are retained and these are set out in the Appraisal.

Proposed Article 4 Directions. There are other distinctive features that are integral to some of the unlisted buildings identified in the previous paragraph that make an important architectural or historic contribution, including selected chimneys, windows and other architectural detailing. Further consideration should be given to an Article 4 Direction in due course.

**Planning Controls and Good Practice in Respect of Other Distinctive Features that Make an Important Architectural or Historic Contribution.** The Appraisal identifies a number of features including walls and or railings that make a particular contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. The walls/railings are protected from demolition without prior consent by virtue of exceeding the specified heights relevant to the Conservation Area or by Listed Building legislation.

**Planning Control and Good Practice, Important Open Spaces, Trees and Groups of Trees.** *Important open land, open spaces and gaps.* Littlebury is fortunate to have a number of areas of open space that contribute to the overall quality of the conservation area. *Particularly important trees and hedgerows.* Extensive tree cover along the southern side of the village and up along the Littlebury Green Road, the mill race water meadow, in the churchyard and in the grounds of Granta House are noted. The stand of trees fronting Church Walk provides an important visual buffer between this modern development and the historic environment of the Mill Lane.

**Enhancement Proposals to Deal with Detracting Elements.** The Appraisal identifies a number of detracting elements together with a proposed course of action. It is recognised that such improvements will frequently only be achieved with the co-operation of owners and other bodies as appropriate.

## Consultation results

11. The comments received at the public exhibition and during the consultation period are set out in the table arranged in the subject order above. Those responses which noted minor inaccuracies in the text of the Draft Conservation Area Appraisal, such as the misspelling of building names, are not included here.

All maps and photo sheets are included in Appendix 1 to this report.

Issue	Representations made	Officer comment
<p>Changes to the Conservation Area</p>	<p><b>The Parish Council</b> suggests extension of conservation area to include the field south of Holy Trinity Church (site of the Anglo Saxon settlement and of Henry Winstanley's House).</p> <p><b>Essex County Council</b>, has provided an assessment of the historic and archaeological importance of the site noting "Our records show that between 1677-8 Winstanley built himself a house in Littlebury and was living there by 1679. The house was located directly to the south of Mill lane in an area which is now open fields</p> <p><b>The Parish Council</b> considers the inclusion of the area of the former yards associated with Northend Farm to be of little importance to the coherence of the proposed Conservation Area.</p> <p><b>The Parish Council</b> but would like to see the Grade II listed Northend Lodge included in the new Conservation Area.</p> <p><b>The Parish Council</b> suggests designation of new conservation area to include the local authority properties at Merton Place.</p>	<p>Although the site does have historic associations with the settlement, there are no above ground remains and the field itself has little visual value. The field is protected from development by the virtue of being outside development limits. Its inclusion within the conservation area would devalue the concept. It is important to maintain the specifically high standard of the quality of Uttlesford's conservation areas.</p> <p>Designation as a SAM might be more appropriate and would afford far more protection. The area is marked on Map A and illustrated on the photo sheet 'Winstanley Field'.</p> <p>On balance officers propose to remove the area of former yard from the proposal to designate new Conservation Area at Northend as marked on Map B.</p> <p>The future of Northend Lodge is protected by the listed building legislation. This listed building is located some distance from the suggested boundary of new Northend Conservation Area and the land in-between is of insufficient special interest to warrant inclusion.</p> <p>Merton Place is a Local authority development dating from the 1950s. In the context of the high</p>

	<p><b>Littlebury residents</b> (two representations). Suggest including in the new Northend conservation area two fields lying to the west of it i.e. the playing fields and the adjacent farm field so that it merges with the existing conservation area.”</p>	<p>architectural and historic qualities of the designated heritage assets within the exiting conservation area in Littlebury and elsewhere, this pleasant group of dwellings is of insufficient interest to warrant designation. (See Map C and photo sheet ‘Merton Place’)</p> <p>The two fields marked on Map D do not contain any specific landscape or built environment feature and consequently are of insufficient interest to be included in the conservation area.</p>
Detracting elements	<p><b>Littlebury resident</b> points out a large blue plastic-covered swimming pool tunnel behind Bakers Row which is located in the middle of the existing Conservation Area and visible from all 1<sup>st</sup> floor windows nearby.</p>	<p>Officers consider it an unsightly element seriously detracting form the character of the conservation area. However, due to its age it is immune from enforcement.</p>
Other	<p><b>The Parish Council</b> supports the suggestion from Littlebury Local History Recorder that Northend should be recorded as ‘North End’.</p>	<p>Ordnance Survey mapping from 1877 onwards to 2012 has recorded the settlement as Northend, through earlier documentation styles it ‘North End’. The council is obliged to use the nomenclature adopted by the Ordnance Survey. It is suggested that if the Parish Council wishes the mapping to be amended that they approach the Ordnance Survey direct.</p>

## 12 Conclusion

The public consultation raised a number of useful points which have been incorporated into the Conservation Appraisal. The document should be amended to incorporate the above comments and the documents use should commence immediate to assist in the determination of planning applications and for implementing the management proposals as set out.

Formal changes to the Conservation Boundary and creation of a new one at Northend will need to be advertised prior to them coming into force. It is necessary to inform the

Secretary of State and English Heritage and place an advert in the London Gazette and local newspapers. We will also notify owners of affected properties of the changes.

### Risk Analysis

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Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Revisions to the Conservation Area	1 There is some risk that revisions will be approved which cannot be justified by the guidelines provided by English Heritage.	2 If revisions to the Conservation Area are approved which the council cannot justify through good practice guidelines, the report and its recommendations will be unsound. Planning officers and applicants will then be without any up to date guidance and applications will be determined against out of date resources.	The report has been carefully produced and amended where any inaccuracies were noted. Consultation has been carried out with the Parish Council, the Local History Recorder and Littlebury residents and advice sought from specialist officers and experts to support the findings.

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.