

Committee: Cabinet

Agenda Item

Date: 27 March 2014

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Title: Conservation Area Appraisal, Little Dunmow

Portfolio Holder: Cllr S Barker

Key decision: No

Summary

1. This report has been prepared and discussed with Little Dunmow Parish Council who support its general content and are now actively working to implement the management actions.
2. The draft Conservation Area Appraisal for Little Dunmow was made available on the Council's website and as printed copies. A public exhibition on 4 December 2013 was attended by the Council's Conservation Officer and the fieldworker who had undertaken the appraisal, both of whom 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 25 November 2013 until 20 January 2014.
3. Little Dunmow 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

4. That the Conservation Area Appraisal be approved and used to assist in the process of determining planning applications and for implementing management proposals.

Financial Implications

5. None

Background Papers

6. The notes of the public exhibition held on 4 December 2013 and all representations received.

Impact

- 7.

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

Finance	None
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	Felsted - various proposals as amended and as contained in report.
Workforce/Workplace	Existing staff resources.

Situation

8. The Little Dunmow Conservation Area was designated in 1980. 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 Conservation Areas.
9. This report sets out the key issues within the attached Conservation Area Appraisal and records 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.

None proposed

Note: As a result of the consultation a number of points were raised by respondents relating to issues raised in the Appraisal report. These representations are included in the table below with appropriate officer comment.

General notes:

Planning Controls and Good Practice in Respect of Other Buildings that Make an Important Architectural or Historic Contribution.

Several such unlisted buildings that make a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area have been identified. The Council will seek to ensure that these are retained. These are as follows: The Old Vicarage, The Old School House, Nos. 1 and 2 The Street and adjoining Priory Farmhouse.

Proposed Article 4 Directions.

There are other distinctive features that are integral to some of the unlisted buildings identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal for Little Dunmow that make an important architectural or historic contribution, including selected chimneys, windows and other architectural detailing. In some situations protection already exists through existing planning controls but in other cases protection could only be provided by

removing Permitted Development Rights via an Article 4 Direction. Should the Council consider such a course of action appropriate there would be a process of notifying the affected owners separately at a later date. This would be associated with further detailed consideration and possible refinement of the general proposals set out earlier in this Appraisal.

Planning Controls and Good Practice in Respect of Other Distinctive Features that Make an Important Architectural or Historic Contribution.

This Appraisal has identified several features including walls and railings that make a particular contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. Some walls/railings are protected from demolition without prior consent virtue of exceeding the specified heights relevant to Conservation Area or by Listed Building legislation. Any proposal involving their demolition is also unlikely to be approved.

Planning Control and Good Practice, Important Open Spaces, Trees and Groups of Trees.

The open spaces, as identified in the Appraisal, represent open landscape features that materially contribute to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and which must be protected. These are the churchyard and the small space fronting the south elevation of St Mary’s church, the open area to the south west of the church and between Priory Place, the open paddocks between the churchyard and Grange Lane and the small pond area to the south east of The Flitch of Bacon Public House. Many trees have already been made subject to Tree Preservation Orders but others worthy of protection have not. Subject to certain exceptions all trees in a Conservation Area are afforded protection and a person wanting to carry out works has to notify the Council. Trees that have not been identified may still be considered suitable for protection by Tree Preservation Orders.

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.

10. Consultation results

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, attributed dates are not included here.

Issue	Representations made	Officer comment
General	<p>Little Dunmow Parish Council considers that the appraisal gives the Parish Council a timely reminder of the importance of the conservation area to the village.</p> <p>They agree that there should be a positive strategy in the Local Plan for the conservation of the historic environment and that the central open spaces that provide uninterrupted views should be</p>	Noted

	protected against inappropriate development.	
Changes to the Conservation Area	<p>English Heritage suggests that the field opposite Barley Farm should be included within the Conservation Area so as to prevent inappropriate development and form a more consistent boundary.</p> <p>A representation made on behalf of Chater Homes Ltd and Home Group agrees that no alteration to the boundaries is required but suggests that the conservation area boundary seems to exclude a later extension to the property shown as the Old School House. It would seem sensible that the building as it is now found, and its present curtilage, is included in the conservation area.</p> <p>A Little Dunmow resident agrees that the Conservation Area boundary is correctly drawn.</p> <p>A Little Dunmow resident (4 representations) notes that the boundary of the Conservation Area opposite the Flitch of Bacon pub should be re-drawn to include the open space area of the old village cricket pitch.</p>	<p>Officers have re-surveyed this part of the Conservation Area and the abutting landscape and conclude that the field is situated outside of the extensive area of archaeological interest and is essentially part of the open landscape beyond the edge of the settlement. The existing Conservation Area boundary is considered to be properly drawn.</p> <p>Officers note the concerns but consider that the boundary as it currently drawn is well defined on the ground.</p> <p>Although of local interest as a former village cricket pitch the field opposite the Flitch of Bacon does not fulfil any of the criteria for designation as part of the Little Dunmow Conservation Area. Officers consider that the present policies provide sufficient protection at this location. When considering the designation of Conservation Areas, the Council is required to ensure that the area justifies such status because of its special architectural or historic interest, and that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that</p>

	<p>A Little Dunmow resident suggests that the field between the churchyard and gravel road, known as the Horse paddock, should be included in the Conservation Area because of its historic usage and the views afforded away from the village.</p>	<p>lack special interest.</p> <p>Whilst being a locally appreciated open space, officers do not consider its visual qualities and association with the built environment contribute significantly enough to the Little Dunmow Conservation Area to warrant inclusion within the boundary.</p>
Character analysis	<p>Little Dunmow Parish Council agrees that the character analysis is well documented and referenced and will provide the Parish Council with an enduring resource.</p> <p>Natural England [and] A Little Dunmow Resident welcome the reference to Green Spaces under the Planning Policy Framework section – paragraph 1.23 (bullet point 7) together with reference to open spaces under the Character Analysis paragraph 1.48.</p> <p>Natural England further suggests that the Council should also look at the fragmentation of open spaces and the linking of them back to paths and other sites.</p> <p>A representation made on behalf of Chater Homes Ltd and Home Group notes that this is a thorough, well-drafted and comprehensive appraisal of the special architectural and historic interest of the conservation area.</p> <p>A Little Dunmow resident (3 representations) considers this a thorough and comprehensive review.</p>	<p>Officers are grateful for the input of the Little Dunmow Parish Council in producing the appraisal document</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
Important buildings	<p>A Little Dunmow resident (4 representations) note the importance of listed and non-listed buildings and approve of the proposals</p>	<p>Noted</p>
Management proposals	<p>Little Dunmow Parish Council agrees that important landscape features must be protected and particularly note the open paddocks</p>	<p>These areas are noted in the appraisal as being important open spaces and water features to be protected from</p>

	<p>between the churchyard and Grange Lane which provide a setting for buildings of historic and architectural interest, the trees in the churchyard and the small pond to the south east of the Flitch of Bacon PH.</p> <p>A Little Dunmow resident (2 representations) states that they would like to see the open spaces preserved, particularly in the vicinity of the church.</p>	<p>development. The Council's adopted policies ENV3 and National Planning Policy Framework provide protection.</p> <p>The open spaces in the vicinity of the church, as shown on the Management Plan mapping in the Little Dunmow Conservation Area Appraisal are recommended to be protected from development. The Council's adopted policies ENV3 and National Planning Policy Framework apply.</p>
Detracting elements	<p>Little Dunmow Parish Council note the management proposals and will endeavour to resolve the problems where possible.</p> <p>A Little Dunmow resident (3 representations) considers the overhead utility cables and poles to be the main detriment to the village scene and that dialogue should be opened with the utility companies.</p> <p>A Little Dunmow resident (2 representations) is concerned about the erosion of verges at Priory Place due to traffic and in front of the church.</p> <p>A Little Dunmow resident (2 representations) is concerned about the number of coaches and buses coming through the village.</p>	<p>Within the staff and financial resources available, District Council Officers will be proactive and provide assistance to the Parish Council.</p> <p>Officers consider the electricity poles an unsightly element detracting from the character of the Conservation Area. The local community and Parish Council could enter to discussions with utility companies.</p> <p>Officers acknowledge that traffic travelling at excessive speed can detract from the character of the Conservation Area. The local community and Parish Council could enter into discussions with Essex Highways on both speed reduction measures and verge repairs.</p>
Other	<p>A representation made on behalf of Chater Homes Ltd and Home Group suggests that the conservation area appraisal would be given added weight by making reference to the relevant English Heritage guidance 'Understanding Place: Conservation Area</p>	Noted

	<p>Designation, Appraisal and Management' (March 2011).</p> <p>A Little Dunmow resident considers that there was not enough publicity about the public exhibition.</p> <p>English Heritage makes a number of suggestions for augmenting and expanding the scope of the appraisal with further sections to include details of traditional building materials and colours, the impact of solar panels, and any current authority approved design guidance.</p>	<p>Letters were delivered to all properties in the Conservation Area and in any other areas affected by proposals, a press release was sent out to local papers/radio as was an email notifications to all consultees on the Council's Objective Planning Consultation system.</p> <p>Noted.</p>
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Conclusion

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

Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Revisions to the Conservation Area	1 There is some risk that the report findings cannot be justified by the guidelines provided by English Heritage.	2 If findings 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 and Little Dunmow 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.