

Committee: Cabinet

Agenda Item

Date: 25 June 2014

12(2)

Title: Conservation Area Appraisal, Great Easton

Portfolio Holder: Cllr S Barker

Key decision: **No**

Summary

1. This report has been prepared and discussed with Great Easton Parish Council who support its general content and are now actively working to implement the management actions.

The draft Conservation Area Appraisal for Great Easton was made available on the Council's website and as printed copies. A public exhibition on 11 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.

2. Great Easton 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 Great Easton 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 notes of the public exhibition held on 11 December 2013 and all representations received.

Impact

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Communication/Consultation	Full consultation undertaken.
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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	The Eastons - various proposals as amended and as contained in report.
Workforce/Workplace	Existing staff resources.

Situation

8. The Great Easton Conservation Area was designated in 1978. 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.

Remove area of Builder's yard, being the site adjacent to Brocks Mead.

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: terrace consisting of The Annex, The Laurels and Ivy House; Meadow View; Grange Barn, Bridgefoot Barn, Nos. 1-3 Maynard's Cottages (including range of outbuildings to rear) and Hillside Cottages.

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 Great Easton 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 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.

The War Memorial on the central green and the pedestrian bridge over the River Chelmer have also been identified as being most worthy of retention.

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

The open spaces as identified and as shown on the plans represent open landscape features that materially contribute to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area which must be protected. As marked on the plans these are: Graveyard to Church of St John and St Giles, grassed areas to east of church and fronting Easton Hall, central green to west of church and grassed area/wooded area with paddock to rear and River Chelmer, being land between Croys Grange and Bridgefoot.

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. Owners are advised to make regular inspections to check the health of trees in the interests of amenity and Health and Safety.

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 or attributed dates are not included here.

Issue	Representations made	Officer comment
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General	<p>Great Easton Parish Council considers that the appraisal is complimentary about the village.</p>	<p>Officers are grateful for the input of the Great Easton Parish Council in producing the appraisal document.</p>
Changes to the Conservation Area	<p>English Heritage suggests that the playing field to the east of the River Chelmer should be included within the Conservation Area as an important open space.</p> <p>English Heritage and Great Easton residents (4 representations) consider that the suggested revision to the boundary to remove the builder's yard adjacent to Brocks Mead would undermine any actions to improve the area and may leave the site vulnerable to inappropriate development.</p>	<p>Officers have re-surveyed the site and the abutting Conservation Area and consider that the playing field is more associated with the adjacent 20th century bungalows which properly lie beyond the Conservation Area. The site as an important community facility whose appearance could be improved. Officers consider boundaries of the Conservation Area are properly drawn in this location but as the play area is adjacent to the Conservation Area it is legitimate to suggest that its visual appearance be enhanced. Assistance in proving such advice might be sought from the Council's Landscape Officer.</p> <p>The builder's yard is currently within the Conservation Area boundary. The site is considered to be a 'brownfield site' however, it falls outside the adopted Village Development Limits which means that there is a presumption against development occurring on the site. Although there is a presumption against development occurring on the site exceptions could be made if, for example, an application was made for affordable housing provided through a housing association for people with a local connection; community, sports or recreation facilities. Conservation Area status</p>

	<p>A Great Easton resident thinks that the builder's yard would make an acceptable infill site once it is removed from the conservation area.</p> <p>A Great Easton resident suggests the current owner should be allowed a pre-agreed time to tidy/develop/organise his land (maybe into affordable houses for local families/young people with a small community shop before it is removed completely from the conservation area boundary.</p> <p>A Great Easton resident considers the revised boundary to be perfect.</p> <p>Highways Agency consider that the proposed revisions are unlikely to result in a material impact on the Strategic Road Network.</p> <p>A Great Easton resident suggests that the appraisal should make reference to the approach to the village from the B184.</p>	<p>alone would not preclude development occurring on a site, though if a site is situated within a Conservation Area some extra control over quality of design is possible.</p> <p>The site is identified in the Uttlesford District Council Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment 2013 (SHLAA) where it is designated GtEAS2.</p> <p>See comment above</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>A note describing the approach to the village has been added to the draft appraisal.</p>
Character analysis	<p>Great Easton Parish Council and a Great Easton resident note that the 'Bell House' opposite the village green was not mentioned in the appraisal and consider that some record of this important building should be made.</p> <p>Natural England welcomes 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 1.47.</p>	<p>Mention of the 'Bell House' and a photograph of the building is now included in the appraisal.</p> <p>Noted</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>Great Easton residents (2 representations) agree with the character analysis.</p> <p>A Great Easton resident suggests Blakey's house appears to be outside of conservation remit.</p>	<p>The property formerly occupied by Mary Blakey and known as Bridgefoot (formerly Bridgefoot Cottage) is Grade II* listed and is currently within the Conservation Area boundary. It is accordingly adequately protected.</p>
<p>Important buildings</p>	<p>Great Easton residents (2 representations) note that the historic buildings in the village need protection and approves of the measures outlined in the appraisal.</p> <p>A Great Easton resident comments that the buildings suggested for conservation are fine but that the Annex should not be Grade II listed.</p> <p>A Great Easton resident suggests the school should be mentioned.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>The Annex is identified as an unlisted building that, as part of a group, makes a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. It is not proposed for listing.</p> <p>The primary school on Dunmow Road, although an important local facility is situated well beyond the current Conservation Area boundary</p>
<p>Management proposals</p>	<p>Great Easton Parish Council members have discussed the points raised at length and are looking at ways to work to improve them.</p> <p>The Church of St John & St Giles and a Great Easton resident are concerned at the management proposals in respect of suggested repairs to the western boundary wall to the graveyard.</p>	<p>The areas as noted in the appraisal being overhead utility cables, the builder's yard and a section of internal boundary wall to the church. Council Officers will be proactive and provide assistance. It must be recognised that such improvements will frequently only be achieved with the owners' co-operation.</p> <p>Officers are aware of the pressure on limited church funds and are more than satisfied that appropriate works will be undertaken as and when resources permit. It is understood that a</p>

	<p>A Great Easton resident agrees that the builder's yard could do with clearing up and states that they would like to see the two barns on the site preserved.</p>	<p>programme of repairs are currently underway.</p> <p>Noted</p>
Detracting elements	<p>A Great Easton resident is concerned about the erosion of verges on the village green due to traffic and in front of the church.</p>	<p>Officers acknowledge that vehicles parking on verges can damage the grass and 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>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>A Great Easton resident asks if an appraisal of Duton Hill and Tilty will be undertaken soon.</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>The programme of appraisals is assessing currently designated Conservation Areas. Currently there is no designated Conservation Area at either Duton Hill or Tilty.</p>

11. 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.

Formal changes to the Conservation Area Boundary 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. The owners of affected properties will also be notified of the changes.

12. Risk Analysis

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 and Great Easton 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.