

**Committee:** Cabinet

**Agenda Item**

**Date:** 18 June 2015

**11**

**Title:** Conservation Area Appraisal, Little Easton

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr Susan Barker

Key decision: **No**

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### Summary

1. This report has been prepared and discussed with Little Easton Parish Council who supports its general content.
2. The draft Conservation Area Appraisal for Little Easton was made available on the Council's website and as printed copies. A public exhibition on 14 March 2015 was attended by the fieldworker 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 6 March to 17 April 2015.
3. Little Easton Parish Council approached Uttlesford District Council officers in 2014 to suggest the designation of a Conservation Area at Little Easton. The Parish Council have 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 throughout the project, which has run since 2007, 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.
5. That the Little Easton Conservation Area be formally designated.

### Financial Implications

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

### Background Papers

7. The notes of the public exhibition held on 14 March 2015 and all representations received.

### Impact

- 8.

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	Thaxted & The Eastons - various proposals as amended and as contained in the report.
Workforce/Workplace	Existing staff resources.

## Situation

9. Little Easton Parish Council approached District Council officers in 2014 with a request to consider the designation of a Conservation Area at Little Easton. 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 and in this case has produced an Appraisal which recommends the designation of a new Conservation Area at Little Easton.
10. 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.
11. The principal issues and recommendations set out in the document are:

A Conservation Area is proposed to include Little Easton Church, all of Little Easton Manor, Church Cottage, Church Lodge, the Rectory, Ravens and Church Row together with the immediate extent of the five ponds to the east of Little Easton Manor.

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.**

Two 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 Rectory and Church Cottage.

### **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. The associated legislation is complex. 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 are protected from demolition without prior consent by 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, these are principally the churchyard, wide verges fronting properties on Park Road and, particularly, the landscape surrounding the ponds. All represent landscape features that materially contribute to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area that must be protected.

Only the most significant trees are shown very diagrammatically. 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. The quality trees in the churchyard and around the ponds serve to define the particular character of the area. Additionally, hedges on the periphery of the village provide a transition from the built environment into the open fieldscape beyond.

### **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
General	<p><b>Little Easton Parish Council</b> is grateful for the help provided by UDC's research and conservation teams in progressing our application for a conservation area. The Parish Council has been consulted on the proposed boundary and fully supports the proposal.</p> <p><b>Essex branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England</b> consider the area to be of sufficient value in historic, architectural and landscape terms to warrant Conservation Area status and therefore support the proposal.</p> <p><b>A Little Easton resident</b> supports the proposed Conservation Area in Little Easton and the documentation, which has been prepared in connection with the proposal.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
Character analysis of Little Easton	<p><b>Natural England</b> welcomes the references to open land and open spaces under paragraphs 2.10 and 2.11 as they provide a valuable landscape setting to the proposed Conservation Area and add to the biodiversity value.</p> <p><b>Natural England</b> 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 as a benefit to both sustainable transport and biodiversity.</p> <p><b>A Little Easton resident</b> notes that the church, houses and lakes combine to make a unique environment.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted#</p>

	<p><b>Little Easton resident</b> agrees with the Character Analysis findings of the Appraisal</p>	<p>Noted</p>
<p>Designation of the Conservation Area Boundary</p>	<p><b>A Little Easton resident</b> agrees that the main land and property pertaining to the historic interest of Little Easton is encapsulated in the boundary.</p> <p><b>A Little Easton resident</b> is happy with the proposed Conservation Area Boundary but is concerned that Easton Lodge itself and its surrounding buildings are largely unprotected save for a few listed buildings</p> <p><b>A Little Easton resident</b> agrees that the church and lakes are integral points of interest to be included in the village.</p> <p><b>Little Easton residents</b> are concerned in respect of the Little Easton Manor Estate buildings (such as the Farm, House &amp; Cottages, and the historic Barn Theatre) that Conservation Area designation will mean that permission has to be sought for repairs.</p> <p><b>Little Easton residents</b> are concerned that Conservation Area designation would prevent the erection of otter proof fencing around part of the ponds area.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Officers have carried out a site visit to Easton Lodge and conclude that the principal buildings and structures, all being listed Grade II, are sufficiently protected. The gardens of Easton Lodge, the principal landscape feature, are also separately listed and as such are afforded protection. Designation as part of a Conservation Area would not offer any additional controls, though some additional recording of the unlisted structures may be beneficial.</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>As the majority of the buildings are already listed or situated with the curtilages of listed structures, Conservation Area designation will not require that any additional permissions be sought when repair works are carried out.</p> <p>Under the provisions of the Town &amp; Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 planning permission is not required for the erection, construction, maintenance, improvement or alteration of</p>

	<p><b>Little Easton residents</b> suggest that the Gardens of Easton Lodge and The Glebe be included in the proposed Conservation Area.</p> <p><b>Little Easton residents</b> object to the proposed Conservation Area on the grounds of the three above points.</p>	<p>a gate, fence, wall or other means of enclosure provided it does not exceed one metre in height where adjacent to a highway used by vehicular traffic. Where the gate, fence, wall or other means of enclosure is not adjacent to a highway used by vehicular traffic it does not need planning permission if it does not exceed two metres in height. The exception to this allowance relates to a listed building, where any such gate, fence, wall or other means of enclosure or an alteration to it requires planning permission. As wildlife trust specifications call for otter proof fencing to be 1200mm high it is unlikely that planning permission will be required unless the fencing is erected adjacent to the road or a listed building.</p> <p>See response to second representation above. Additionally, Easton Glebe is listed Grade II*. This status should provide adequate protection for the building and any pre-1948 structures within its curtilage.</p> <p>Noted</p>
Buildings that make an important architectural or historical contribution	<b>A Little Easton</b> resident agrees with the buildings so identified.	Noted

## 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 designation of 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 Historic England and place an advert in the London Gazette and local newspapers.

## 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 statutory bodies, Little Easton Parish Council and local 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.