

Committee:	Development Control	Agenda Item
Date:	7 November 2007	7
Title:	Great Dunmow Conservation Area Appraisal and draft Management Proposals	
Author:	Roger Harborough, Head of Planning and Housing Strategy, 01799 510457	Item for Decision

Summary

Under the programme of Conservation Area Appraisals that ran during the first six months of 2007, a draft appraisal and management proposals for Great Dunmow have been prepared. A community involvement programme has been conducted. This report sets out the feedback.

The Conservation Area Appraisal has been prepared and discussed with the Great Dunmow Town Council which is understood to support its general content. A public meeting has been held, chaired by the Chair of the Development Control Committee, attended by officers who presented the issues and answered questions. The meeting was on 25 June and was well attended with about 50 in attendance. This report summarises the representations received at the meeting and subsequent to it in the consultation period that lasted until 20 July, and comments on them.

The Chairman of the Great Dunmow Town Council's Planning Committee commented that *'I think this is a splendid document. Well thought out and beautifully presented'*.

The Dunmow Town Design Group, whilst making a number of detailed comments that are reported below said that *'The group welcomes the Conservation Area Appraisal in principle. A clear statement of the value of the townscape in the town will greatly strengthen the control of development...'*

The Conservation Area Appraisal programme has proved popular with the local communities and this particular appraisal has generally been supported. Where criticism has been included in feedback, this has generally been that the scope and depth of the appraisal could have been greater. The programme however had to reflect the resources available. Resources are a significant constraint on the Council's ability to implement the recommendations.

Recommendation

That the report (as proposed to be amended) be approved and used to assist in the process of determining planning applications and for implementing Management proposals, that the Great Dunmow Conservation Area boundaries be formally amended and that additional planning controls in the form of Article 4 Directions be initiated as described below

Background Papers

The Great Dunmow Conservation Area Appraisal and Draft Management Proposal document together with notes of the public meeting held on 25 June and all representations received.

Impact

Communication/Consultation	Full consultation undertaken.
Community Safety	Not affected
Equalities	Not affected.
Finance	The report's recommendations if implemented will have some limited cost implications to UDC, both capital and revenue. For example there would be an advertising cost to publish amendments to the CA boundary. If Article 4 Directions are introduced, any planning application submitted in respect of these will not generate fees. Capital costs will be incurred by a range of partners if they voluntarily implement recommended management proposals. A small capital cost would be incurred by the District Council if it decided to implement the modest enhancement proposals suggested in respect of its Dunmow offices.
Human Rights	Not affected.
Legal implications	If implemented as proposed, various existing Permitted Development Rights will be removed.
Sustainability	The report focuses on environmental issues seeking to preserve the environment of the town including its quality buildings and open spaces.

Ward-specific impacts	Various proposals as set out in report.
Workforce/Workplace	Modest increase in workload for Development Control and Conservation staff.

Situation

The principle 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. Those proposed for inclusion are as follows: a large open land south of 54 – 80 Stortford Road; a narrow tree belt south of Jubilee Court; an area opposite the Braintree Road at its junction with the High Street; Long Mynd corner of Stortford Road and High Stile and Thatchers Beamont Hill. The UDC development and The Charters at Church End is proposed for exclusion as this development from the late 20th century adds little to the Conservation Area.

General planning control and demolition of buildings.

In addition to listed buildings, many other buildings that make an important architectural or historic contribution to the conservation area have been identified and any application involving their demolition will normally be refused. The quality residential development at Britlings Gardens Corner is identified as a beacon of quality whose design principles need to be applied to new development elsewhere in the District. The quality of Great Dunmow CA is outstanding.

Potential redevelopment sites.

Three such sites have been identified namely the former Infant school to the north of the Downs, the garage on the Stortford Road and the Chequers PH. Some representations were received in respect of these sites that are noted below.

Listed buildings.

There are many quality listed buildings that are particularly diverse in their appearance and use of materials and development proposals affecting them must be sympathetic.

Additional controls to quality non listed buildings.

Article 4 Directions should be introduced to remove the permitted development right to alter windows and doors and roofing materials on selected buildings that make an important architectural or historic contribution.

Open Spaces.

Extensive areas of important open spaces including land in private ownership, where development should not occur, are identified.

Additional controls to boundary walls and railings.

The high importance of walls and railings has been noted and because of this an Article 4 Direction should be introduced to remove permitted development rights for selected walls and railings beyond the curtilages of listed buildings.

Archaeological assessment.

Because development sites in Great Dunmow may be important in this respect, an archaeological field assessment should be carried out in advance of development.

Detracting elements.

A number of detailed elements that detract from the quality of the environment have been identified together with complimentary enhancement proposals.

Comments Received:

The comments received are set out in the table arranged in the subject order above. By necessity for inclusion in this Officer report they are brief. In total there were over 40 written representations. A considerable number of these originated from the Dunmow Town Design Statement Group who, as noted above, support the Appraisal in principle. The author of this report offered to meet the group to discuss their concerns but this did not occur.

Issue	Representations made.	Officer comment
Changes to the conservation area	<p>The proposed additions and subtractions were appropriate.</p> <p>General agreement but suggests inclusion of the Recreation Ground to 'ensure its long term safety'.</p>	<p>Approve as set out in appraisal report.</p> <p>It is considered the boundaries of the CA are drawn appropriately in this location. Reference to the high environmental importance of land in the Chelmer Valley is set out elsewhere in the Council's Historic Settlement Character Assessment Report published in August as part of the evidence base for the Local Development Framework.</p>
	<p>Resident living in Britlings Gardens Corner, whilst appreciating comment about</p>	<p>This development has been removed from the CA and the Appraisal</p>

	this 'beacon' development, draws attention to the poor quality of the nearby UDC development nearby.	suggests additional planting by UDC to improve matters.
	The document should refer to the East of England Plan	Agreed
	The setting of the town could have been analysed in greater depth including the way the countryside impacts on the built environment.	This study was restricted to the CA. The setting of the town is analysed in the Historic Settlement Character Assessment Report to which reference is made above.
	An analysis of the gradual development of the town with diagrams would have assisted	Perhaps, but resources did not permit and the benefit would have been of limited value.
	The detailed description of buildings is comprehensive and will assist in controlling development but there was insufficient assessment of elements such as their walls, roofs windows etc. The details should have been in an appendix.	Perhaps a more detailed description could have been provided but a balance was struck to provide a relatively short and readable document free of technical jargon.
	Quality of modern development to rear of the Saracen's Head appropriate and fits in well.	Agreed
	Brignall Place, corner of High Street and Braintree Road, inappropriate out of scale and should have been set back.	Individual opinions will differ but officers consider the overall outcome to be acceptable and that the building and its design principles are generally in sympathy with the

		mixture of heights and roofscapes elsewhere in the town.
	The Post Office would benefit from a makeover	Agreed. The Appraisal identifies the PO as making an important contribution. It states that advertisement signs on front of building detract to small degree but not sufficiently to warrant inclusion as a detracting element.
Potential redevelopment sites.		
(A) Former Infant school, Rosemary Lane	<p>Narrow access. Development would impact on surrounding properties. View of lanterned building is important. Educational use may be appropriate. Development would create noise and light pollution. Low density non-residential preferable. Continued education use may be appropriate given the growth of Great Dunmow.</p> <p>Potential for damage caused by off site street parking in nearby areas.</p> <p>Issues of traffic ownership and access raised at the public meeting.</p> <p>Not stated on what basis redevelopment sites have been identified. Essential that design briefs be prepared and whilst comments in the appraisal may be valid they are not sufficiently comprehensive.</p> <p>There was active discussion at the public meeting on this</p>	<p>The Council will be guided on the important issues of access by the County Highways.</p> <p>The site has ceased to function as a school and redevelopment is inevitable. The key point is to ensure that redevelopment retains selected buildings of historic importance and causes minimum disruption and detrimental impact to neighbouring properties. The comments in the appraisal referred to opposite as being 'valid' are no substitute for design briefs that should be prepared for all potential redevelopment sites, subject to staff resources.</p> <p>Pendennis was identified and perceived</p>

	<p>subject. There was general understanding in some quarters that redevelopment was appropriate but that the dated and inscribed building should remain as set out in the appraisal.</p> <p>Expressed linkage with the site and nearby house 'Pendennis' may be the reason for the latter's 'inflated importance' and that I feel the bogus appraisal given to Pendennis is entirely inappropriate and would 'significantly impact the potential for the provision of an efficient modern replacement house'.</p> <p>The structure of Pendennis has little merit and is built on clay. Deeds state it was built in 1931. It is not a 19th century building and therefore does not make an important architectural or historic contribution.</p> <p>Would be grateful if you would please review and correct the assessment of Pendennis.</p>	<p>as a building worthy of retention with quality windows and original railings to front. The appraiser considered it of architectural interest with a sufficient level of original features retaining its scale and visually important in the street scene. The appraisal noted the property was unoccupied and speculated there might be a linkage with potential development of the school site. However this did not affect the field officer's decision to include it where the building was noted as being '19th/20th century'. In view of the precise nature of this representation the origins date to be amended, but the building is still considered to be of sufficient merit to positively contribute to the character of the conservation area.</p>
(B) The Chequers PH	<p>Whilst understanding permissions have been granted consider space should have been retained to allow the 'town to breath'. The police station should be retained.</p>	<p>It is considered the space is ugly and will benefit from redevelopment but in any event planning permissions have been granted. The police station is a listed building and will be retained.</p>
(C) The Ford	<p>Building out of keeping with</p>	<p>It is considered the site</p>

Garage site	<p>surroundings but part of the townscape. Rear buildings particularly unattractive as is the use. Any redevelopment should be restricted in height. Not concerned about demolition.</p> <p>Owner of sites comments. Not a desirable activity close to centre of town. Built in 1934, frontage of which is Art –Deco. Not a building of quality and if it ceases to operate as a garage any architectural interest it has is negated. Accepts any redevelopment should be of the highest quality.</p>	would benefit from comprehensive redevelopment but that part of the frontage building with its rare and distinctive modernistic style should be retained.
(D) Others	Curious redevelopment of the White Street	Design changes could not have been achieved as redevelopment is approved.
Listed buildings	<p>There were no general representations</p> <p>The Victorian letterbox inserted in the wall at no. 56 North Street warrants protection.</p>	<p>Officers consider the real issue is to ensure proposals affecting Listed buildings are of the highest quality and undamaging to their fabric, character and setting. It is hoped the Management proposals emphasise this.</p> <p>Officers will consider the protection of the Victorian letter box further, including the possibility of ‘listing ‘ it.</p>
Additional controls to quality of non listed buildings	Reference to 2 nd World War pillboxes should have been made.	<p>It is accepted they are of interest, but none of these exist in the study area.</p> <p>An Article 4(2) Direction as suggested by the Council (not needing approval by the Secretary of State) can</p>

		<p>only apply to residential buildings and only to those parts fronting a highway, waterway, public footpath or open space. It is estimated that about 30 dwellings will be affected by the proposal to introduce additional controls to protect windows, doors and roofing materials. This measure will assist considerably in protecting the quality of the built environment. If approved by Members it will be subject to a separate consultation exercise and subsequent applications will not generate a fee income.</p>
<p>Open spaces and trees</p>	<p>Support with conditions. Report would be enhanced by a thorough tree and landscape appraisal.</p> <p>In agreement with planting trees as described.</p>	<p>An issue of staff resources. The retention of trees and open spaces as identified by the appraisal is considered to be essential.</p>
<p>Additional controls to boundary walls and railings.</p>	<p>There were no representations</p>	<p>The report identifies these features and notes that walls, brick and flint particularly, make a real contribution to the character of the conservation area. About 20 properties would be affected. Processes and impact relating to consultation and fees are the same as in relation to buildings (see above).</p>

Archaeological assessment	The section on Roman history is not given the same weight as afforded by the Essex report.	This is a more general planning document. The important point is that there is scope to require an archaeological field assessment as appropriate,
Detracting elements.	The detrimental impact of street furniture signage and surfaces should have been examined in greater depth and an action plan devoted for their removal and improvement. Neglected open spaces, paths byways, electricity poles and cables should be added.	A number of these are identified but clearly the Dunmow Society feels that more examples should have been included. The same point was raised at the public meeting where we were advised the Dunmow Society had drawn up a list. This could be developed further by UDC and the Society pressing the Highway Authority and utility companies if staff resources permitted.
	Fine as far as it goes but there should have been a comprehensive assessment of undermining features	The quality of the CA's in the District is high. To undertake studies as proposed would be beneficial but would require greater staff resources than are currently available.
	Generally agree but raises the issue of boiler flues that can sometimes be intrusive. Also intrusive advertisement signs on new development in the High Street.	Boiler flues are visually detractive elements but frequently unavoidable. Effort should be made to locate them in a least conspicuous position. Class 8 permits the display of advertisements on hoarding around temporary construction sites outside conservation areas for

		up to three years.
	Overhead wires and proliferating telephone cables out of character in some parts of the town.	This is accepted but clearly is a matter with high resource implications to the respective utility companies.
Others		
	Market Place would be improved by moving lighting on pedestrian refuge.	Agree, report suggests potential of an enhancing feature in this location.
	Suggests Town sign should be moved to Threader's Green.	Initially a matter for the Town Council
	Road traffic is major detracting element. Suggests detailed remedial opportunities may arise when the 'north west bypass finally opens'	A matter best considered once the bypass is opened.
	Poor state of parcel of land (from description believed to be south of Springfield). Considers land should remain undeveloped.	Part of allocation GD 4 in Adopted Local Plan. Development will rectify issue of untidiness.
	Points of fact, reference Market Street should read Market Place. Also insert reference to Talberds Ley.	Rectify error/ amend as appropriate.
	Concern about materials used in new developments.	As Members are aware, officers seek to achieve appropriate materials. As noted at the public meeting, the general consensus is that developers increasingly

		recognise the importance of good design and use of materials. The appraisal certainly recognises the importance by identifying late 20 th century development at Church End as an environmental beacon.
	Advice by Town Council sometimes rejected by UDC.	Members and Officers always consider local representations but there are inevitably occasions when opinions differ.
	The lack of detailed design advice is seen as a major weakness. National guidance needs to be reiterated elaborated and amplified in relation to Great Dunmow.	There is no value in repeating national guidance. The Council has adopted the Essex Design Guide to provide further local guidance.

Officer recommendation

- 1 The document be amended to incorporate the above comments and that, with immediate effect, be used to assist in the determination of planning applications. Once the Local Development Framework is in place they be adopted as 'Supplementary Planning Documents' to support relevant policies in the new plan.

- 2 The management proposals be implemented as resources permit
- 3 An Article 4 Direction be introduced to remove the permitted development right to alter windows, doors and roofing materials on elevations fronting a highway, waterway, public footpath or open space. This Direction will be subject to separate consultation.
- 4 Similarly an Article 4 Direction be introduced to control the demolition of non-listed boundary walls and railings fronting a highway, a waterway, public footpath or open space identified in the appraisal document.
- 5 Changes are made to the conservation area boundary as recommended. In this respect it will be necessary to inform the Secretary of State and English Heritage and place an advert in the London Gazette and local newspapers. Discussions commence with owners of 'detracting elements' with an objective of seeking a voluntary solution unless the matter can properly be resolved by planning enforcement.

Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Resource and staffing implications	Inevitable if proposals are implemented.	Some effect on very limited Conservation staff resources. Expenditure, modest implications exaggerated in importance due to the current difficult financial circumstances facing the Council.	Potential need to reorganise staff resources.