

Committee:	Cabinet	Date:	11 January 2018
Title:	Saffron Walden Conservation Area Appraisal, 2017/18		
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Susan Barker		
Report Author:	Mrs Angharad Hart, Conservation Officer 01799 510531	Key decision:	No

Summary

1. This report seeks to introduce members to the updated Conservation Area Appraisal document for Saffron Walden.
2. The existing appraisal was published in 2012. A recent re-survey has been carried out by officers to review the content of the appraisal, including the conservation area boundary and management proposals. This is to ensure that the information is accurate and up-to-date and that the appraisal continues to inform positive development and management of the Saffron Walden Conservation Area.
3. The revised proposal includes a new section on the characteristics of the conservation area and how these might inform future development, as well as updated legislative information. The management proposals have been revised and it is also proposed to extend the conservation area boundary in zones 4 and 6. This is to recognise the positive contribution and quality of these additional areas, to the special historic and architectural interest of Saffron Walden.

Recommendations

4. That members approve the revised Saffron Walden Conservation Area Appraisal document, in conjunction with the proposed boundary changes.

Financial Implications

5. Fees associated with advertising the updated appraisal in the London Gazette.

Background Papers

6. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

N/A

Impact

7.

Communication/Consultation	A public consultation has already taken place.
Community Safety	None
Equalities	None
Health and Safety	None
Human Rights/Legal Implications	None
Sustainability	None
Ward-specific impacts	Saffron Walden specific
Workforce/Workplace	Limited impact to Planning, Trees and Landscape and Conservation staff due to inclusion of wider area in the conservation area boundary, and identification of two non-designated heritage assets.

Situation

8. The revised appraisal document builds on the existing Saffron Walden Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan document, published in 2012. Much of the historic information and character analysis remains largely unchanged, however, the following has been revised:
9. **Area References** – The existing appraisal divides the conservation area into Areas 1-6. The updated version adopts the term ‘zone’, subdividing the area into zones 1-6. This is to avoid ambiguity and align with terminology found in current guidance.
10. **Legislative Information** – Information regarding the legislative framework has been updated to reflect the latest guidance. References to English Heritage have been updated, to Historic England and references to associated bodies that have ceased to exist since 2012, have been omitted.
11. **Characteristics (Character Analysis section)** – A dedicated section has been introduced to detail the key characteristics of the Conservation Area, including roofscape, layout, form and signage. This is intended to assist officers, developers and owners in recognising the characteristics that are significant to, and enhance, the Conservation Area. This should be used to inform future alterations or development in and around the Conservation Area.

12. **Management Proposals** – Management proposals have been updated to reflect the works completed successfully, in line with the guidance set out in the previous appraisal, and amended where some of the recommended works have been partly undertaken, but not resolved. Where works have not yet been implemented, these remain on the plan, and shown on the relevant maps.
13. **Conservation Area Boundary** – It is proposed to extend the boundary in Zones 4 and 6.

Zone 4 – It is proposed to include the **Radwinter Road Cemetery** along Radwinter Road in the Conservation Area Appraisal, owing to the historic significance of the site, its architectural and military interest and the positive impact of the site on the primary route into the Saffron Walden Conservation Area, from the East. In order to link this site to the existing Conservation Area, it is proposed to draw the boundary line along the south of Radwinter Road, and including no. **18 – 26 Radwinter Road**. It is felt that there is sufficient interest in the majority of properties here, to justify their inclusion in the boundary. **22 – 24 Radwinter Road** have been identified as non-designated heritage assets.

The boundary to the west will be revised to omit the site of Saffron Lodge Residential Complex. Much of the interest of this site was sadly lost in its development, including the brick and flint wall fronting the site, and the building on the site, identified in the previous appraisal as an 'orange' building (which positively contributed to the character and appearance of the area). The new complex has insufficient interest, historically or architecturally to justify its continued inclusion in the Conservation Area.

Zone 6 – It is proposed to include the entirety of the **former Friends School site** on Mount Pleasant Road, to include the grounds, the lime tree avenue and variety of associated school buildings on the site.

Part of the school grounds and adjacent playing fields currently fall within the boundary of the Conservation Area. Initially, it was proposed to include a larger section of the adjacent school playing fields, but not its entirety, which includes a number of trees along the eastern and southern boundary which currently benefit from Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's). This was in-line with guidance issued by Historic England, regarding Conservation Areas.

Comments submitted during the public consultation were mixed. Historic England advise against including areas which lack historic or architectural merit, so as not to devalue the significance of the Conservation Area. However, there has been widespread local support for inclusion of the entirety of the playing fields, for a variety of reasons.

Having reviewed the comments, it must be noted that inclusion within the Conservation Area boundary does not prevent development, but rather offers a means to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, by informing and managing appropriate development. However, the playing fields form part of the historic setting of the school, and

its function, and contribute positively to the character and appearance of the conservation area, in terms of aesthetic, historic, social and evidential value. As such, officers consider there is a justification for including the entirety of the playing fields in the boundary. It is also preferable to draw the line of the boundary along a physical boundary that can be easily interpreted on the ground. Drawing the boundary around the existing field boundary line, would achieve this, and reduce ambiguity in future.

It has therefore been proposed to amend the draft conservation boundary as shown on the 'Proposed' map, in the final document.

Further to this, a recent site visit and additional research has highlighted a number of mid C20th school buildings that have architectural and historic interest on the site. These are considered to be valid phases of the expansion and development of the school complex, and good examples of their period architecturally. They are little altered overall and represent two of only a very few examples of the modernist style in the conservation area. Built between 1925-1949, these are the geography room and biology laboratory building to the south and the school assembly hall to the north west of the main building¹. For this reason, it is considered that they should also be highlighted as part of the appraisal and given due regard in any future proposals for alteration, repairs or development. These are highlighted in orange on the relevant maps.

14. **Non-designated Heritage Assets** – Two additional non-designated heritage assets have been identified on the mapping. 34-36 High Street, Saffron Walden (Area 2) and 22-24 Radwinter Road (Area 4). These are highlighted 'orange' on the maps, and a brief description of each can be found in the document.
15. Following a recent site visit and additional research, a further two structures have been identified within the former Friend's School complex, these being the structure housing the Geography Room and Biology Laboratory building to the south and the school assembly hall to the north west of the main building.
16. A full record of the comments received during the public consultation can be found in the accompanying 'Report of Public Participation on the Saffron Walden Conservation Area Appraisal and Draft Management Plan'

Risk Analysis

17.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Conservation Area Appraisal becomes out-	3	3	Approve the updated Conservation Area appraisal document,

¹ Roger Buss, The School on the Hill – 300 years of Friend's School - Principal Building Developments 1879 -2002 (Friend's School, 2002)

<p>dated and lacks robustness in planning decisions/ appeals and inquiry.</p> <p>The Local Authority is unable to manage change in sensitive areas of the town, where they are not part of the Conservation Area, and unable to resist harmful alterations and development, that may compromise the quality of the historic environment, and setting of heritage assets.</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>which reflects current guidance, policy and legislation.</p> <p>Approve the revised conservation area boundary to zones 4 and 6.</p>
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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.