

Agenda Item IMD32

INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION REFERENCE IMD: 2016/32

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| TITLE | Sonning Conservation Area Appraisal - Public Consultation |
| DECISION TO BE MADE BY | Mark Ashwell, Executive Member Planning & Regeneration |
| DATE AND TIME | 13 September 2016 at 1pm |
| WARD | Sonning |
| DIRECTOR | Heather Thwaites, Director of Environment |
| REPORT TO BE PUBLISHED ON | 5 September 2016 |
| VENUE | Room SF1, Wokingham Borough Council Offices, Shute End, Wokingham |

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Adoption by the Council of a document which will assist in identifying, understanding and maintaining and enhancing the special historic and architectural character and appearance of Sonning Conservation Area.

RECOMMENDATION

The Executive Member is asked to agree that:

- 1) the Draft Sonning Conservation Area Appraisal is made available for a 6 week period of public consultation;
- 2) the Draft Sonning Conservation Area Appraisal is amended in response to any comments received during consultation period. A further Individual Executive Member Decision will be required for the document to be adopted by the Council

SUMMARY OF REPORT

Conservation areas (CA's) are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.

Local Planning Authorities (LPA's) have a duty to designate these areas under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. LPA's also have a duty, 'from time to time', to review their conservation areas to determine whether any part, or new part, should remain or become part of the conservation area.

Sonning CA was designated in September 1971 and revised in 1980 and in June 1996, Although the Parish Design Statement for Sonning was published in 2004, it has been 20 years since the CA itself was last formally appraised.

Officers have been working with the Parish Council and Sonning & Sonning Eye Society in the production of an appraisal document for Sonning CA. The Parish Council and

Sonning & Sonning Eye Society have carried out the research and produced the draft document. This has been now passed to the Council to finalise and potentially adopt. It would be a useful tool and as a material consideration in support of planning decision making (including Appeals).

This paper requests permission to undertake a public consultation prior to adopting and implementing this CA Appraisal.

Background

Conservation areas (CA's) are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.

Since conservation areas were introduced by the Civic Amenities Act in 1967, over 10,000 CA's in the UK have been designated reflecting the popularity of this legislative tool in identifying and protecting our most valued historic places.

The original legislation has been superseded by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act). This legislation places a duty on local planning authorities (LPA's) to designate these areas, from time to time to review them and formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas.

Once designated, it gives the LPA additional controls over the demolition of unlisted buildings and works to trees, restricts some permitted development rights and tightens regulations on advertising. It also places a duty on LPA's to have special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of their conservation areas while undertaking their planning duties.

Analysis of Issues

The Council has 16 CA's most designated in the 1970's or 1990's. Sonning CA was designated in September 1971 and revised in 1980 and in June 1996. The specific frequency of the duty to review and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of CA's is not set out in any legislation but since 1996 no further appraisal of the CA has been carried out and it has been 20 years since the CA itself was last formally appraised.

In 2012 the Council was approached by Sonning Parish Council and Sonning & Sonning Eye Society to consider the feasibility of the Council adopting a 'local community led' CA Appraisal for Sonning village. The Council and Historic England provided advice and guidance but the Parish Council and Sonning & Sonning Eye Society have organised and carried out the research and produced the draft document.

The draft appraisal assesses significance of the area through an illustration of historic development, archaeology and morphology of the settlement. It provides a spatial analysis through considering the layout and street pattern, open spaces, trees and landscape, focal points and important views. Important buildings are identified (both listed and unlisted) and characteristic building styles, materials and colours are noted. A number of buildings are highlighted as worthy of consideration for local or national listing. The character of the area is described in some detail by subdividing into distinct character areas. Important aspects of the natural environment are also considered and

noted. The appraisal summarises the overall significance of the CA and identifies both positive features and those which are considered to detract from its special interest of the area. It highlights vulnerabilities and opportunities for enhancement.

This has been now been passed to the Council to finalise and adopt. It will be a useful tool to inform development proposals and would be a material planning consideration in assessing applications that impact on the CA.

This local engagement and collaboration and appraisal methodology is consistent with guidance from Historic England ([Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management \(Historic England Advice Note 1\)](#)). It should also be noted that it does not propose any changes to the boundary or any additional planning controls.

This paper requests permission to undertake a public consultation prior to adopting and implementing this CA Appraisal as a future IEMD decision. The public consultation and further analysis of responses received will be undertaken in conjunction with Sonning Parish Council and Sonning & Sonning Eye Society and is likely to be a six-week period in September and October 2016.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

| | How much will it Cost/ (Save) | Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall | Revenue or Capital? |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Current Financial Year (Year 1) | 0 | N/A | N/A |
| Next Financial Year (Year 2) | 0 | N/A | N/A |
| Following Financial Year (Year 3) | 0 | N/A | N/A |

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

None

Cross-Council Implications (how does this decision impact on other Council services, including property and priorities?)

This decision would not significantly impact on any Council properties within the CA given it does not introduce or change the effect of the designation. It will however provide useful information if the Council, as property owner, were looking to make any future planning applications.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

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| Director – Finance and Resources | No comment |
| Monitoring Officer | No comment |
| Leader of the Council | Conservation areas (CA) are an important piece of planning framework within the |

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| | borough. Its overarching aim for protection important areas is commendable. Therefore it is important to periodically review existing CA's to reflect the current position. I fully support this IEMD. |
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| List of Background Papers |
| Historic England Advice Note 1 - Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management |

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