

CABINET
21 June 2022

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: CONSERVATION AREA REVIEWS

REPORT OF: *SERVICE DIRECTOR - REGULATORY*

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: *EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR PLANNING AND TRANSPORT*

COUNCIL PRIORITY: RESPOND TO CHALLENGES TO THE ENVIRONMENT

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To consider the draft Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plans (CAAMPs) for the Ashwell and Pirton conservation areas, including proposed revisions to the conservation area boundaries for public consultation.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That the draft CAAMPs for Ashwell and Pirton are noted.
- 2.2. That approval is given for public consultation to take place on the draft Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans and the proposed amendments to the conservation area boundaries at Ashwell and Pirton.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. To ensure that the conservation areas and historic assets within North Hertfordshire are appropriately assessed and designated to inform decision making for planning applications and in the preparation of local and neighbourhood plans.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1. The Council could refrain from undertaking any further work on conservation areas or local assets, but this would not reflect national policy or legislation which requires local authorities to review and monitor conservation areas from time to time and conserve local and designated assets.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1. Executive Members and Deputies have been briefed on the relevant matters in this report.
- 5.2. The consultants have consulted with the respective Parish Councils for some background information, which has been included in the draft reports.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This decision is a key Executive decision and was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan on 14 February 2022.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1. Conservation areas are designated by the Council in its role as local planning authority. They exist to manage and protect the special architectural and historic interest of a place. Local planning authorities have a duty to review past designations from time to time to determine if any further parts of the area should be included within conservation areas or no longer merit that designation.
- 7.2 Within the emerging Local Plan Policy SP13: Historic Environment, states that the Council will pursue a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment through periodic reviews of Conservation Areas and publication of detailed guidance. In paragraph 4.160 of the supporting text of that Policy it states that: *Over the lifetime of this Plan, we will carry out a programme of work relating to our Conservation Areas with priority for locations with potential development pressures and where there have been significant changes since the designation was first made. The reviews will include the production of character statements and will provide opportunities to consider amending boundaries.*
- 7.3 Many of the District's conservation areas were designated in the 1960's and 1970's. Consultants were commissioned in 2019 to prepare character statements for the 33 conservation areas that were without information to support the designations. The final character statements were endorsed by Cabinet in January 2021 and are available to view of the Council's [website](#).
- 7.4 The consultants prepared a Conservation Area Summary Report which recommended five further areas of work, including full conservation area appraisals for Ashwell and Pirton. These were included in the future programme of work also endorsed by Cabinet in January 2021.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1. Consultants were appointed in July 2021 to undertake the conservation area appraisals for Ashwell and Pirton. A draft CAAMP has been prepared for both villages and they are attached as appendices A and B to this report.
- 8.2. The purpose of the CAAMP is to provide baseline information on the conservation areas and will enhance the understanding of the conservation areas, their development and inform future design.
- 8.3. Each draft CAAMP sets out the background information about the legislative and policy context for designating conservation areas, includes a description of the history of each settlement, explains the proposed revisions to the conservation area boundaries and

describes the assessment of significance for the conservation areas. There is also a section in each CAAMP which sets out the potential opportunities for enhancement and proposals for the management of the conservation area.

- 8.4. Historic England recommend that local communities are engaged and consulted when carrying out conservation area appraisals, as the perspective of people living and working in the area will add depth to the appraisal and generate support and understanding for future plans.
- 8.5. It is proposed that public consultation on the draft CAAMPs take place between July and September. The draft CAAMPs will be made available on the Council's website and a drop-in session will be held in each village where the consultants will be available to explain the draft proposals. The Council will work with the two Parish Councils to promote the consultation period in the villages.
- 8.6. Depending on the outcome of public consultation, the process may lead to the formal amendment to the conservation area boundaries which will be reported to Cabinet for formal approval.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. Under the Terms of Reference for Cabinet, the Constitution states that it may exercise the Council's functions as Local Planning Authority and receive reports on strategic planning matters, (except to the extent that those functions are by law the responsibility of the Council or delegated to the Service Director: Regulatory).
- 9.2. Section 69 of Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires local planning authorities to designate areas which they consider possess architectural or historic interest worthy of preservation or enhancement as Conservation Areas. As part of this, section 71 of the Act requires the local planning authority to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these areas, such as in the form of an appraisal document. It is also the Local Authority's duty to ensure that special attention is paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the conservation when making planning decisions, as per section 72 of the Act.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. The costs for the conservation area work are being met from the planning fees reserve. £120k has been earmarked for conservation work over an anticipated three years.
- 10.2. There are no specific revenue implications arising from this report.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. Sustainable Development of the District is identified as a Corporate Risk. The preparation of a CAAMP for the two conservation areas will assist in promoting sustainable development in the future.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2. Section 8.4 refers to the key engagement of the community in developing CAAMPs. This engagement should advance equality of opportunity/foster good relations in consultation with all demographics within the area (including those who exhibit protected characteristics).

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1. The Social Value Act and “go local” requirements do not apply to this report.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1. The preparation of CAAMPs for the conservation areas will assist in the management of the historic environment.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1. There are no new human resource implications arising from the contents of this report. The public consultation process will be undertaken by the consultants.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 Appendix A – Ashwell Conservation Area - CAAMP
- 16.2 Appendix B – Pirton Conservation Area - CAAMP

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 18.1 [Cabinet report : Conservation Area Summary Report and Next Steps, 26 January 2021, Agenda Item 10](#)