

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE – 09/06/2015

Title:

WITLEY CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

**[Portfolio Holder: Cllr Brian Adams]
[Wards Affected: Witley and Hambledon]**

Summary and purpose:

The purpose of this report is to recommend that the Witley Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA) be adopted by the Council as a material consideration and used in the determination of any application for planning permission and listed building consent within the Conservation Area (CA).

How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:

The Witley CAA supports the environmental priorities of the Council by encouraging protection and enhancement of Waverley's unique mix of rural and urban communities. The production of CAAs is set out in the Planning Service Plan 2014/15.

Financial Implications:

There are no resource implications. The use of the document as a material planning consideration will be managed within existing resources. Some of the environmental enhancement projects could be funded through Section 106, Planning Infrastructure Contributions (PIC) or the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

Legal Implications:

The Witley CAA will be used as a material consideration when considering planning and listed building applications in the area.

With regard to the proposed extensions, these will give an additional degree of protection against the demolition of buildings and walls within the boundary of the CA. It also means that additional tests (as set out in the Local Plan and National Planning Policy Framework) are considered when determining planning applications. Finally, the permitted development rights in these areas are reduced. This means that the extent of building works that can be carried out without the need for planning permission is reduced.

Introduction

1. Witley is one of 43 Conservation Areas (CA) in Waverley. Currently eight Conservation Area Appraisals (CAAs) have been completed (Wrecclesham, Bramley, Farnham Town Centre, Wheelerstreet, Godalming Town Centre, Milford, Chiddingfold and Haslemere).

2. In 2011 Executive agreed a programme for the commencement of CAAs. This is the sixth CAA to be completed since the programme commenced. Wheelerstreet was the pilot Appraisal which was used to test the guidance set out by English Heritage. Following successful adoption of the Wheelerstreet CAA, this approach formed the basis of all future CAAs.

The Conservation Area Appraisal

3. CAAs are undertaken to identify and explain the character of the Conservation Area (CA). This document will identify the specific qualities of the Witley CA and thereby help to manage change within the area. The Management Plan section also identifies a variety of projects that should be implemented to preserve and enhance the area.
4. The need to undertake CAA is set out in the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (section 71) and is supported through saved policy HE8 of the Waverley Local Plan.
5. It is therefore considered pertinent for Waverley to undertake CAAs with the aim to appraise the character of each CA; identify the qualities which should be preserved and enhanced, and produce a management plan to include proposals for enhancement where necessary. This process also allows a review of the boundary and an assessment of adjacent areas to evaluate whether the boundary should be extended.
6. The CAA is attached at Annexe 1.

The proposed boundary amendments:

7. Five amendments to the conservation area boundary are proposed within the Witley CAA. The amendments have been proposed following careful consideration of English Heritage guidance, and the architectural and historic interest of each area. The boundary has not been reviewed since 1980, and there have been significant changes to Witley and CA guidance in that time. There are few opportunities to review the boundary of a CA, so it is timely to undertake this work as part of the CAA. It is unknown when the opportunity to assess the boundary will present itself again. The reasons for each amendment are fully explained in the following paragraphs.
8. Extension: Enton Mill
The properties in this area reflect a wide range of architectural detailing styles which are typical of the Surrey vernacular. Traditional tile hanging, timber framing, brick nogging, leaded light windows, tall red brick chimneys and galletting all add to the character of the lane. Additionally, the vestiges of the historical use of the mill found in the materials such as the weather-boarding, and the varied roof heights and detailing, such as an eyebrow dormer on Enton Mill, provide particular interest and beauty to the area. The architectural detailing of this group of properties is akin to the properties within the current CA boundary, but additionally supplements further the architectural interest of Witley in terms of traditional Surrey styles and the historic connection with the Ponds.

The setting of the Enton Mill area adds to the character of the properties. The ponds to the south of Enton Mill are fed by Witley Ponds, and the rural character of Witley is mirrored at Enton Mill by the surrounding trees and woodland.

9. Extension: Garden at Witley Lodge

Since the CA was designated, the curtilage of Witley Lodge has been extended, and thus the existing CA boundary now dissects the garden of Witley Lodge. The Lodge has significant architectural interest, and the inclusion of the lodge within the original designation is supported. However, to ensure there is no future confusion, the full garden is proposed to be included within the CA.

10. Removal: George Eliot Close (in part)

George Eliot Close was developed in the 1980s, after the Conservation Area was designated. The current CA boundary dissects 22 George Eliot Close, and does not include the full estate. The road is a modern development, which does not contribute to the special architectural or historic interest of the wider CA, and thus it is proposed for removal from the CA.

11. Removal: Tree Nursery to the rear of Churchfields and All Saints Church

The piece of land east of Churchfields and west of George Eliot Close has been recommended for removal from the CA following assessment of the land in accordance with guidance from English Heritage. Conservation Areas are defined as 'an area of special architectural and historical interest, the character or appearance of which is desirable to preserve or enhance'. The guidance is clear that CA designation is not generally appropriate for protecting areas of wider landscape, unless the character or appearance of the open area particularly relates to the historic fabric of which the CA designation relates.

The tree nursery area has been recommended for removal from the CA firstly as there is no architectural interest on the site, and there is no evidence of any historical links between the tree nursery and the wider CA to warrant the protection of an area of wider landscape. Whilst there have been suggestions that Witley Manor previously occupied this site, there is no current evidence to support this contention. SCC Archaeologists have been consulted on this point specifically and have confirmed that there is no indication in their records or resources that the area was ever anything other than open space.

There is limited visibility of the tree nursery from the churchyard, as there is a physical boundary defined by mature evergreen trees. Therefore the setting of the church and churchyard is not deemed to be sufficiently attributed to the tree nursery and therefore does not merit designation.

The footpath which runs alongside the tree nursery is recommended to remain within the CA due to its historic link between the church, school and surrounding village outside of the CA.

It should also be noted that the CAA, and any proposed amendments to the boundary, is assessed taking into account the value of the CA and surrounding area in terms of architectural and historic interest. The potential for future development is not a consideration within the assessment of the CA boundary, and it is not appropriate to designate land to protect it from future development. Indeed, CA

designation does not prevent development. In this instance, the site is also within the Green Belt and the CAA will not alter this designation.

12. Removal: South-west corner of CA on Church Lane

The small area of land at the south-west corner of Church Lane is part of a larger field. English Heritage guidance is clear that CA designation is not appropriate for areas of landscape, and as this will be the sole opportunity for Waverley to assess and amend the boundary of the Conservation Area for the foreseeable future, it is recommended that the small piece of field should be removed from the Conservation Area.

English Heritage has confirmed its support of the proposed amendments to the boundary.

Consultation on the draft CAA

13. A walkabout was conducted with Local Councillors and representatives from the Parish Council.

14. A public consultation was undertaken between 12 December 2014 and 23 January 2015 to support the development of the CAA and to ask the public's views of the proposed extensions. Full details of the consultation, together with a summary of the comments received and the officers' response are set out in the Consultation Statement which is attached at Annexe 2.

18. 69 responses were received to the draft document, of which 28 were a copy of a proforma circulated within the village. 4 additional copies of the proforma were received with no contact details. A petition was received with 156 signatures. The responses fell into one of five categories:

a) Key consultees

- English Heritage considered the appraisal a very thorough assessment of the conservation area and is supportive of the suggested boundary changes which follow the guidance in their documents.
- Witley Parish Council noted resident's concerns, but the Committee understood that these did not constitute grounds for rejecting the draft document which followed guidelines from English Heritage.
- Surrey County Council Archaeology do not object to the removal of the tree nursery from the CA after assessment of its contribution to the historical significance of the area.
- No comments were received from SCC Highways or Landscape.
- Natural England did not wish to comment on the consultation.
- The Waverley Tree Officer responded suggesting inclusion of a notable tree within the document. The CAA has been updated accordingly.

b) General comments on the CAA and Management Plan

A number of comments were received which gave additional local knowledge and information of the CA. Additionally, comments were received regarding the CAA process (the consultation procedure, the purpose of the CA and why it has been produced now), the inclusion of further vistas and plans, specific site queries (such

as Miltons Yard and 26 George Eliot Close) and clarification of Management Plan projects. Where appropriate, the report has been amended accordingly.

c) Comments on the proposed extensions to the CA

Comments were received in support and objection to the proposed extensions. Those who objected predominantly objected to all changes in the CA boundary. In terms of the specific additions to the CA, the majority of respondents supported the changes. The comments received both for and against the additions to the CA are summarised in the Consultation Statement (Annexe 2). Officers recommend that due to the special interest of these sites, the proposed additions to the CA be agreed.

d) Comments on the proposed removals from the CA

Comments were received in support and objection to the proposed removals. The majority of those commenting on the specific changes were opposed to the removal of sites from the CA. It should be noted, however, that the main concerns raised regarding the removal of land from the CA were about possible future development on the land resulting from its removal from the CA, rather than the historic or architectural special interest of the land. Whilst the concerns are acknowledged, officers remain of the view that the removal of these specific sites from the CA are justified on conservation/heritage grounds. Details of the comments received in relation to the removal of sites from the CA are included in the Consultation Statement (Annexe 2).

The potential for archaeological remains on the tree nursery site was also raised; Surrey County Council Archaeology were consulted and researched this in some detail. They concluded that there was no evidence to support this contention.

Officers continue to recommend these removals based purely on conservation grounds and these areas do not accord with the criteria as set out in English Heritage guidance.

e) Suggestion for other boundary amendments

The following areas were suggested for inclusion in the CA:

- Field to west and south west of Enton Mill
- Land west of Witley Lodge
- SHLAA site 366 (Land west of George Eliot Close, Witley) and Chandlers School Playing Field
- Roke Farm
- Witley Recreation Ground and SHLAA site 618 (Land west of Petworth Road, Witley).

Response:

English Heritage guidance states that CA designation is not an appropriate means of protecting the wider landscape and therefore it is not considered appropriate to include these areas within the Conservation Area.

Conclusion

19. The Witley CAA document identifies the specific qualities of the CA and thereby helps to manage change within the area. It has been subject to a robust consultation process to ensure residents and interested stakeholders had the opportunity to comment on and shape the final document.
20. It is proposed that the appraisal including the proposed changes to the CA boundary, be adopted as a material consideration to be used in the determination of applications for planning permission and listed building consent within the conservation area. Each of the proposed boundary changes are shown on Figure 22 (page 24) of the Witley CAA document (attached at Annexe 1).
21. If the document is adopted by the Council, the next steps are to advertise the proposed extensions and removals in the local paper and London Gazette (in accordance with the Act). In addition the Secretary of State will be notified.

Recommendation

It is recommended to the Council that the CAA for Witley be adopted as a material planning consideration, to include the following amendments to the boundary:

- a) Inclusion of Enton Mill Area
- b) Inclusion of the Gardens at Witley Lodge
- c) Removal of The Tree Nursery to the rear of Churchfields and All Saints Church
- d) Removal of George Eliot Close (in part)
- e) Removal of the South-west corner of CA on Church Lane.

Background Papers

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

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