



To: Executive Councillor for Planning and Climate Change: Councillor Tim Ward
Report by: Head of Planning Services
Relevant scrutiny committee: Environment Scrutiny Committee 11/06/2013
Wards affected: Trumpington

CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY REVIEW AND APPRAISAL FOR BROOKLANDS AVENUE
Not a Key Decision

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The City Council has an obligation under Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to periodically review its Conservation Area designations and boundaries, to consider any new areas, and under Section 71 of the Act to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these areas.
- 1.2 Earlier this year, the Council appointed consultants who have drafted an Appraisal of the Brooklands Avenue Conservation Area. The consultants propose an extension to the boundary of the Conservation Area at the same time. This draft Appraisal provides an up to date assessment of the ways that the Brooklands Avenue area meets current national criteria in terms of special architectural and historic interest for Conservation Area designation, and in addition concludes that sections currently outside the existing boundary are also worthy of inclusion.
- 1.3 A period of public consultation was held between 2nd April and 30th April 2013. The broad consensus of opinion was in favour of the proposals as outlined in the draft Appraisal.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Executive Councillor is recommended to approve the Appraisal of the Brooklands Avenue Conservation Area which is attached as an Appendix and to agree the revised Conservation Area boundary.

3. Background

- 3.1 Funding for the Pro-Active Conservation work, including Conservation Area Appraisals, was agreed for the recent and current financial years.
- 3.2 Conservation Areas are defined as “areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”. Conservation Areas comprise a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. They also serve as a useful record of information for pro-active work, such as Supplementary Planning Documents or other formal or informal guidance on the development of a given area.
- 3.3 Consultants were invited to quote for work to appraise the Conservation Area in July 2012 and one of three bids was accepted.
- 3.4 The methodology the consultants used for the work was in accordance with the best practice guidance set out in Planning Policy Statement 5 and Guidance on Conservation Appraisals, February 2006.
- 3.5 English Heritage, Cambridge Past, Present & Future, the University of Cambridge, Ward Councillors, Brooklands Avenue Area Residents' Association (BAARA), Accordia Residents Association, the Wherry Housing Association and the Hobsons Brook Trust were consulted.
- 3.6 The public consultation period was held from the 2nd to 30th April 2012. The public consultation was promoted on the City Council website with a link to the draft Appraisal and a comments form. A press release was issued to promote the consultation. Hard copies of the document were available at Cambridge City Council Customer Service Centre for reference along with comments forms. Occupiers of those properties proposed to be added to the current Conservation Area should the draft Appraisal be agreed, but not currently within one, were advised of the exhibition and consultation by leaflet drop.
- 3.7 A public exhibition on the Appraisals (including Newnham and Southacre appraisals) was held on the 18th April at the Bowls Club, Brooklands Avenue. In a two and a half hour period 38 people attended the exhibition to meet with Conservation Officers. They were mainly concerned about the Brooklands Avenue Conservation Area review.

The main issues are

- Altering the conservation area boundary to include Accordia
- Use of an Article 4 Direction to protect the detailed character and appearance of the conservation area
- Amending the conservation area boundary to transfer properties on the north side of Brooklands Avenue into the conservation area (these are currently in the Historic Core Conservation Area).

3.8 In total the consultation on the Brooklands Avenue Conservation Area Appraisal produced 25 written responses of which 18 were from Accordia residents. Of the responses from Accordia residents all except one agreed with the proposed boundary changes. Eight commented in favour of an Article 4 Direction and one against.

3.9 Of the seven non-Accordia responses, five were against the inclusion of Accordia. The BAARA response summarised its views as being that although some of its members are opposed to the inclusion of Accordia, nevertheless, provided that certain safeguards are incorporated - most especially the residential-use provision which is para 7.07 in the existing appraisal - and the two parts of the area are regarded entirely separately in conservation terms, those members fears would be assuaged.

3.10 The BAARA response also confirmed individual responses to the effect that residents within the existing conservation area boundary considered that if an Article 4 Direction is applied to the unified design of the Accordia estate, it should not cover the surrounding streets with their mixture of styles of houses, some already altered.

3.11 Only one response challenged amending the conservation area boundary to transfer properties on the north side of Brooklands Avenue into the Brooklands Avenue Conservation Area. Only two responses opposed the removal of the small section of land on Trumpington Road.

3.12 A summary of the responses has been included in Appendix 1.

3.13 The paragraph 7.07 of the existing Brooklands Ave appraisal states,

THE CITY COUNCIL WILL NOT PERMIT THE CHANGE OF USE OF DWELLINGS TO COMMERCIAL PREMISES AND WILL ENCOURAGE THE RETURN TO RESIDENTIAL USE.

Large houses can often be converted relatively easily to commercial uses, but this erodes the character of the area and leads to disturbance of neighbouring dwellings. Car parking and movements are potentially the most problematic, in terms of appearance, noise and loss of gardens. The need for external fire escapes and improvements to security particularly by means of additional external lighting can also incrementally rob the area of its attractive residential character.

Whilst this (Local Plan-like policy) format is no longer appropriate in non-Development Plan Documents, the sense of this paragraph can be incorporated into the revised appraisal.

- 3.14 Regarding the two parts of the area being treated separately in conservation terms (within any appraisal) this was seen by non-Accordia residents as being fundamental to the acceptability of inclusion of Accordia within the conservation area. Their view was that otherwise there should be two separate conservation areas. Clearly, Accordia has a front “address” onto Brooklands Avenue and there is a historic link between the two areas as part of the same estate land formerly, though in terms of building/layout they have very different characteristics. In response, Officers propose that the final appraisal document incorporates two separate character areas (also to be shown on the appraisal map). This is an accepted way of differentiating between areas of different character within any conservation area. Effectively, section 13.3 “Description of the Accordia Development” in appendix 3 of the draft Appraisal is brought forward into the body of the document.
- 3.15 In the draft Appraisal, the consultants have suggested that the use of Article 4 Directions to control alterations be considered in the Accordia estate and for some dwellings in the Brooklands Avenue area. Article 4 Directions in effect remove some Permitted Development Rights for property owners in a specified area. This would have to be subject to specific consultation. The Appraisal does not, on its own, obligate the Council to take such an action. A decision on whether to make an Article 4 Direction does not need to be taken as part of consideration of this report. It may be taken as part of the separate report on such Directions to be considered in a city-wide context. Detailed consideration of the case for an Article 4 Direction for the Accordia estate is included in the separate report, also part of the June 11th, 2013 Environmental Scrutiny Committee agenda.

- 3.16 The recommendation is to approve the alterations to the boundary of the Conservation Area, as shown on the proposed Conservation Area map in the Appraisal. The proposed new boundary includes the Accordia estate, properties on the north side of Brooklands Avenue, and removal of the small section of land on Trumpington Road.
- 3.17 Subject to approval of the Appraisal and prior to publication, the most up to date base map will be used for all the maps in the document. This may differ slightly from that included with the Appraisal at Appendix 2 and may be done without the formal approval of the Executive Councillor for Planning and Climate Change in order to provide factual updates showing changes to the Appraisal area that have occurred on the ground since the publication of the draft study.

4. Implications

(a) Financial Implications

The Appraisal has already been paid for from the Pro-Active Conservation Program budget.

(b) Staffing Implications

The extension to the Conservation Area may result in some additional workload arising from planning and tree work applications that involve properties and trees in the Conservation Area boundaries.

(c) Equal Opportunities Implications

There are no direct equality and diversity implications. Involvement of local people in the work followed the guidance set out in the Statement of Community Involvement. It should be noted that there are additional responsibilities on householders living within Conservation Areas who will need to apply for planning permission for certain works to dwellings and trees.

(d) Environmental Implications

The Appraisal provides a useful base of information from which to help protect and enhance the existing historic and natural environment of the Brooklands Avenue area.

(e) Procurement

There are no procurement implications.

(f) Consultation

The consultations are set out in the report above.

(g) Community Safety

There are no direct community safety implications.

5. Background papers

These background papers were used in the preparation of this report:
National Planning Policy Framework

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

English Heritage: Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management, March 2011

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/advice/advice-by-topic/landscape-and-areas/conservation-area-guidance/>

Consultation draft Brooklands Avenue Conservation Area Appraisal, 2013

6. Appendices

Appendix 1

Summary of responses to public consultation

Appendix 2

Draft Brooklands Avenue Conservation Area Character Appraisal

7. Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact:

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