



To: Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Transport: Councillor Kevin Blencowe  
Report by: Head of Planning Services  
Relevant scrutiny committee: Environment 12/1/16 Scrutiny Committee  
Wards affected: All

## **UPDATE ON PRO-ACTIVE CONSERVATION WORK Non-Key Decision**

### **1. Executive summary**

1.1 This report reviews the work that has been completed as part of the Council's pro-active conservation work program to date and the projected work for 2016-17. The report also seeks approval from the Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Transport on a specific request to designate Barrow Road a conservation area.

### **2. Recommendations**

2.1 The Executive Councillor is recommended:

- a) To agree the pro-active conservation program as set out in this report and Appendix 1.
- b) To agree to the preparation of a draft conservation area appraisal for Barrow Road as set out in this report.

### **3. Background**

3.1 Beside the Conservation team's day to day work on Planning and Listed Building applications and involvement in pre-application

consultation, many projects have been completed under the pro-active conservation work program in the past several years. Such work includes reviews of several Conservation Areas and their boundaries, two Article 4 Directions, and various Suburbs and Approaches Studies. The following report details the work completed to date and future work for 2016-17. The information is presented in a table for ease of reference and is attached as Appendix 1.

3.2 Apart from the work detailed in this report, the Conservation team provides considerable support to the Planning Service in the assessment of a wide variety of planning applications. For example, the conservation team provided consultation responses on 1289 applications between October 1, 2014, and September 30, 2015, including 62 pre-applications. It is also continuing to provide advice on a significant number of development schemes at pre-application stages prior to formal applications.

3.3 The original pro-active conservation work program was set up in 2008-9. A look back at work completed since 2008-9 reveals the following achievements so far:

- Completion of thirteen Conservation Area Appraisals (either updates or new documents), including appraisals for Trumpington, Mill Road and St. Matthews (now "Mill Road"), Storey's Way, Conduit Head Road, Chesterton and Ferry Lane, West Cambridge, New Town and Glisson Road, Castle and Victoria, Riverside and Stourbridge Common, Brooklands Avenue (now includes Accordia), Newnham Croft, Southacre, and The Kite.
- Completion of seven Suburbs and Approaches Studies, Huntington Road, Madingley Road, Barton Road, Newmarket Road, Long Road, Hills Road and Trumpington Road
- Implementation of two Article 4 Directions applying to public houses outside conservation areas and to the Accordia estate.

3.4 The **available budget** to fund outstanding work currently amounts to £6,750. There is a separate budget for **historic advertising signage restoration** with an outstanding balance of £13,000. Officers have contacted a number of building owners in the past few years, however there has been limited interest in the restoration of historic advertising signage. Some building owners are reluctant to have such improvements fearing the improvements will limit their ability to make further changes. While it

efforts will continue to ensure preservation of such signage, it is suggested that the current budget for this work be used flexibly for other pro-active work such as updating conservation area appraisals and discreet projects as needed, for example area-specific article 4 directions.

3.5 In March of 2014, officers received a request to designate **Barrow Road** as a new conservation area. This request was made again in October, 2015. In order to be designated a conservation area, the “test” under The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires an area to be considered of “special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”. The request for conservation area designation was not supported by the Executive Councillor in October 2014, however since this time the residents have started, and offered to complete, a draft appraisal to the editorial control of the City Council. This approach to the co-sharing of work would be similar to that now in place for development briefs on allocated development sites where the site owner, through enlisting consultant services, prepares a draft development brief at their own expense. Prompted by residents, discussions have already taken place with council officers regarding preparation of an appraisal for Barrow Road. Such discussions intended to ensure that, if agreed by the Executive Councillor, a proper, detailed and “evidenced-based” appraisal could be produced in a draft form to the editorial control of the city council. This “shared resources” approach has proved effective already in relation to three such arrangements, specifically relating to preparation of development briefs for the New Museum’s site, the Ridgeons site at Cromwell Road, and the council’s Mill Road Depot.

3.6 **City Centre Public Realm Supplementary Planning Document.** Draft Policy 9 of the Cambridge Local Plan: Draft Submission 2014 requires the preparation of a public realm strategy setting out how projects and initiatives would be coordinated and delivered. Officers in the Planning Services are in discussion with colleagues at the County Council regarding the potential to twin up the preparation of the strategy with the planned City Centre Access Study work being done to support the City Deal. There are obvious interrelationships of these two strands of work to the City Council’s pro-active conservation work, hence key members of the conservation team will need to be involved in this work. It is expected that the City Council will need to procure the preparation of the City Centre Public Realm Strategy SPD, the scope and detailed arrangements of which are being considered now for commencement in 2016.

- 3.7 **Mill Road Conservation Area – possible Article 4 Direction.** As part of the program agreed at the Environment Scrutiny Committee on 14 January 2014, Officers have reviewed residential parts of the Mill Road area to assess whether there are benefits in potentially bringing some harmful impacts on the conservation area such as unsympathetic window and door replacements, highly colored render etc., into planning control. This would be carried out via the introduction of an Article 4 Direction in consultation with all stakeholders, including residents, members and planning officers familiar with development control procedures. It is intended that the conservation team will first liaise with the Executive Councillor, local ward members and planning colleagues in early 2016 to consider this matter further.
- 3.8 The Next tranche of **conservation area appraisal updates** will involve those appraisals approved longest ago. For example, the Storeys Way Conservation Area Appraisal was approved in 2007, and as it is considered best practice to update such appraisals every 5 years this appraisal should be updated. Officers are proposing a rapid update format. Resources in the existing conservation team are limited and outstanding pro-active funding can be used, if needed, to update this and future appraisals.

## **4. Implications**

### **(a) Financial Implications**

Funding has been earmarked from the existing Pro-active Conservation Program budget as noted.

### **(b) Staffing Implications**

Officers in the Urban Design and Conservation Team are leading the work. The Conservation section was reduced to a total of 3 full-time equivalents (FTE) in 2014. Together with the very high number of requests for application comments which is driven by planning application submissions and pre-application enquiries, there is limited capacity for undertaking pro-active conservation work. Resources must therefore be targeted to matters of greatest conservation and heritage importance.

**(c) Equalities and Poverty Implications**

There are no direct adverse equality or diversity impacts.

**(d) Environmental Implications**

The environmental implications of the program are considered to be positive as it supports the quality and continuity of the city's historic environment which contribute to economic success, quality of life and place in Cambridge to the benefit of residents, business and tourism alike.

**(e) Procurement**

Specialist consultants have been procured to undertake some of the Conservation Area Appraisal work, and the budget accounts for this cost.

**(f) Consultation and communication**

Consultation with residents and stakeholders is a key part of the Pro-active Conservation Program. Consultation is particularly important to the review of Conservation Area Appraisals. Officers consult on draft appraisals for example and inform those whose property will be impacted by a new Conservation Area designation and invite comment in reply. Relevant ward members are kept informed as and when area-based projects are undertaken and consulted upon.

**g) Community Safety**

There are no direct community safety implications.

**5. Background papers**

These background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

Report on 2014-15 Pro-active Conservation Program.

**6. Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Pro-active conservation work completed to date and planned for 2016-17.

## **7. Inspection of papers**

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

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Appendix1–Pro-active conservation work completed to date and planned for 2016-17

Project	Update	Estimated Cost
Local Plan Review	The Urban Design & Conservation Team has been contributing to this work at all stages to date e.g. Issues and Options report, drafting of policies, and site specific assessments, and will continue to support the process at examination.	Officer time
Buildings of Local Interest (BLIs) (Policy 4/12 / Draft Policy 62 & Appendix G)	The mapping and database for the existing list have now been reconciled so that they appear as planning “constraints” consistently. A number of additions to the list, via for instance recommendations in the Conservation Area Appraisals, require consideration. This is intended to be undertaken in 2016-17.	Officer time and £2000 for a temporary contract.
City Centre Public Realm Strategy SPD	This work relates to policy as part of the Cambridge Local Plan 2014: Draft Submission. Policy 9 (The City Centre) requires the preparation of City Centre Public Realm Strategy Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). Discussions have already started with Cambridgeshire County Council on the scoping of the this work and will be progressed in detail in 2016-17. The SPD will help support the City Deal projects in and around the historic core to be progressed with partners.	Consultant services to be procured. Budget exists within the service budget. Officer time required to manage strategy can be covered by the services and potentially shared with the county council.

<p>Conservation Area reviews (Policy 4/11)</p>	<p>The current Historic Core Area Appraisal (2006) has now been updated and is the subject of a separate report (requesting approval to consult on an update to that document).</p> <p>For information, the following represents all other Conservation Area Appraisals and their dates of approval:</p> <p>Historic Core (2006)  Storeys Way (2007)  De Freville Avenue (2009)  Chesterton and Ferry Lane (2009)  Conduit Head Road (2009)  Trumpington (2010)  Mill Road (2011)  West Cambridge (2011) Castle and Victoria (2012) Riverside and Stourbridge (2012)  New Town and Glisson Road (2012)  Brooklands Avenue (2013)  Newnham Croft (2013)  Southacre (2013)  The Kite (2014)</p> <p>The next tranche of Appraisal reviews on the basis of government guidance that appraisals should be kept up to date and not be more than five years old, would start with Storeys Way. Given limited resources, this work would constitute rapid updates to represent any significant changes rather than being in-depth reviews.</p>	
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<p>Barrow Road – Request for conservation area designation</p>	<p>In March 2014, the then Executive Councillor for Planning and Transport received a request asking the Council to consider the designation of Barrow Road as a Conservation Area. By letter to residents dated the 26th March, 2014, the Executive Councillor responded stating that council officers would review the potential to complete the appraisal, including the potential boundary being wider than Barrow Road itself e.g. including Bentley Road.</p> <p>By resolution from the meeting of Environment Scrutiny Committee in October 2014, the Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Transport decided not to support the preparation of an appraisal due to the potential impact on an already full work program for the conservation team. However, as noted in the main body of this report, officers suggest that a new way of producing the brief is progressed which sees the residents of the road cover the time and cost of preparing a draft appraisal under the editorial control of the City Council. This approach is already working successfully in other examples e.g. development briefs, and so is recommended as the way forward for Barrow Road.</p> <p>Subject to detailed confirmation of the timing of the work, a draft appraisal could be presented at the Environment Scrutiny Committee meeting of March 2016 and consulted upon thereafter. Subject to detail comments and further amendments, a final appraisal could be considered at a committee meeting in July 2016.</p>	<p>Cost of consultation and ultimately advertising is minimal. Equally cost and time of reviewing a draft appraisal as prepared by residents is relatively minimal and can be undertaken at minimal cost/time and fit around existing other work.</p>
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<p>Article 4 Directions</p>	<p>At the meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Committee on 14 January 2014 the following resolution was agreed:</p> <p><i>“...that the more vulnerable Buildings of Local Interest (BLIs) outside conservation areas be brought forward for Article 4 Directions under delegated authority by the Head of Planning in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Planning &amp; Climate Change and Environment Scrutiny Chair and Spokes”.</i></p> <p>The more vulnerable Buildings of Local Interest are considered to be those outside conservation areas (ie those not subject to control of demolition) and particularly houses on large plots on the city approaches and former institutional buildings. The initial tranche of these buildings will be proposed for detailed consideration in late 2015, following a review of the most vulnerable.</p> <p>At the meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Committee on June 11, 2013, the following resolution was agreed:</p> <p><i>That the City Council Conservation team’s Pro-active Conservation program include a phased program (one per year starting post 2013/14) of introducing focused Article 4 Directions for Conservation Areas where adopted appraisals have evidenced harm to these area's character or appearance or where specific requests are brought to the attention of the Executive Councillor for Planning &amp; Climate Change.</i></p> <p>The work, as noted earlier, has focused on the residential areas around Mill Road. In following years would focus on Riverside &amp; Stourbridge Common and Castle &amp; Victoria Road areas. Officer time to support this work has been limited in the past year given the extremely high volume of pre-application and application review work the team has completed in the past year for the wider planning service.</p>	<p>Budget figure to be determined and dependent on initial work undertaken in respect of the Mill Road area</p>
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<p>Restoration of Historic Wall Painting Signage/Advertising</p>	<p>Despite officers making contact with several building owners in the city, there has been limited interest in this initiative. Also, several building owners were approached in 2014 and 2015 but did not wish to take part. Considerable time has been spent with some owners of buildings obtaining quotes for scaffolding and signwriting, only for them to subsequently decline the council's approach to undertake the restoration works. Notwithstanding these efforts, it is recommended that the program continues but funding is more flexibly used for other pro-active conservation work set out in this report e.g. conservation area appraisals, future BLI's and possible Article 4 Direction investigations.</p>	<p>Balance currently £13,000</p>
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