

**REPRESENTATIONS ON PROPOSED MILL ROAD AREA
CONSERVATION AREA DRAFT APPRAISAL
May 2011**

SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF NHS CAMBRIDGESHIRE

SUMMARY

On account of the character of existing development from Brookfields Hospital to Brooks Road on the northern side of Mill Road/Brookfields which differs significantly from that in the remainder of the Appraisal area, and the likely impact of known redevelopment sites in this area, it is considered that there is no justification for, or benefit to be gained from, including this area within the designation. To do so would weaken the '*raison d'être*' for the Conservation Area which is otherwise founded on the sound premise of the integrity of the architectural character which should be preserved and/or enhanced.

The reasoning behind this request is noted below.

1. BUILDING CHARACTERISTICS

Whilst the key characteristics of the Romsey Town Area are agreed as stated in the Appraisal (pages 35 – 36), it is considered that none of these features are exhibited in the area as identified in Document 1 and as illustrated in the photographs attached at Documents 3. The defining features of this area are described below.

a. Brookfields Hospital

Brookfields Hospital, which is immediately adjacent to the former Priory Garage site (Document 2), continues to provide a range of health facilities within a range of buildings of differing ages and architecture. Mill House to the road frontage provides drug related advice, Headway is housed in one of the single storey buildings dating for the end of the 19th century and which formed part of the former Isolation hospital whilst to the rear elderly and palliative care is provided. Other buildings house administrative functions.

To the road frontage there is a single storey administrative building of recent construction constructed of red bricks under a concrete pantiled roof which is atypical for the area proposed to be covered by the Conservation Area (Document 3 Photograph 3).

From the road frontage there is a view of another recent building construction of red brick (Document 3 Photograph 2).

Also visible is one of the buildings which comprise part of the former Isolation Hospital. Two buildings from this period remain. The one seen is used for administrative purposes and, like the others, has been much altered to accommodate changing requirements and uses.

To the front of this building there is a row of Scots Pines which are protected by virtue of a blanket Tree Preservation Order which covers all trees on the Brookfield site.

On the easternmost part of the hospital site, and fronting onto Mill Road, is Mill House which, as stated in the Appraisal, is a fine building (Document 3 Photograph 9). This is already identified as a Building of Local Interest and should its significance be considered to be so great, then there is no reason why it should not be proposed to be designated as a Listed Building of Special Architectural or Historic Importance so as to ensure its retention.

b. Ashtead House

This new residential development lies immediately adjacent to Mill House (Document 3 Photograph 4). It is immediately apparent that this development is not in keeping with the identified character of the proposed Conservation Area. It is a three storey development of modern design constructed of yellow bricks with irregular fenestration and with an access to rear parking court under the building (Document 3 Photograph 4).

c. Nos 2 – 10 Brookfields

These properties comprise interwar semi-detached properties with bay windows under red tiled roofs set back from the road frontage behind gardens demarcated by wood paling fences (Document 3 Photograph 5). There is no element of this development which conforms with the defining characteristics of the proposed Conservation Area.

d. Building Plots adjacent to No 10 Brookfields

Development is currently underway subsequent to Planning Permission Reference 09/0745/FUL ((Document 3 Photograph 6). The development comprises 2 pairs of residential properties with a form similar to, but different from, Nos 2 – 10 Brookfields (Document 4). The proposed Conservation Area also includes the rear of the site where the second pair of semis is under construction. Again the design of these dwellings in no way reflects that prevailing characteristics of the proposed Conservation Area as stated in the Appraisal.

e. Houses at junction Brookfields/Seymour Street

These properties represent yet another modern style of development being constructed of red brick under a concrete tile roof of shallow pitch and with modern fenestration which are totally atypical to the defining characteristics of the proposed Conservation Area (Document 3 Photograph 7).

f. Junction Brookfields/Brooks Road

This busy road junction, with development being set far apart on the opposite sides of the road, does not have any defining architectural features. (Document 3 Photograph 8).

To summarise, it will be seen from the foregoing analysis that the properties in this area recommended to be excluded from the CA designation do not conform in age, layout, form, style or materials to the defining characteristics of the Conservation Area as noted.

2. LACK OF CONTINUITY AND IMPACT OF REDEVELOPMENT SITES

It is contended that the proposed redevelopment sites fronting the northern side of Mill Road, which are excluded from the proposed Conservation Area, will weaken the integrity of the proposed Conservation Area designation. Once developed, together with other contiguous sites, the character of this area will be significantly altered which will serve to question the wisdom of including the CA 'outlier' to the east on the northern side of Mill Road. These sites are identified in the plan attached at Document 2 and comprise the following:

a. Former Robert Sayles Depot

Although this site has been screened by hoardings with a community garden to the front, the possible proposed redevelopment of the site for a mosque will not, in all probability, replicate the key characteristics of the area as defined on the document.

b. Former Priory Garage

This site, immediately adjacent to the former depot site, presents an extensive frontage to Mill Road (Document 3 Photograph 1). The redevelopment of this area will inevitably have a profound impact on the character of the area by reason of its size. Whilst the design might be sympathetic to the local character, it will in no way be able to replicate the defining architecture of the area so as to justify its inclusion within a Conservation Area.

Other anticipated redevelopment schemes which will impact on the character of the Conservation Area include:

c. Brookfields Hospital

Development will be ongoing on this site in order to continue to provide health services in buildings which are fit for purpose. There will in all probability be a need to update the vehicular and pedestrian access into the site which at the present time is narrow and undefined even though it serves substantial buildings to the rear.

The proposed Conservation Area boundary does not appear to be very appropriate given that it is tightly drawn around the footprint of the buildings to the north and the eastern boundary comprises the flank wall of the Health Centre building.

d. Brookfields Health Centre off Seymour Street

This needs in need of upgrading or replacement if it is to remain fit for purpose.

It is pertinent to note that the rear elevation of this building, which has several windows, is proposed as the boundary of the Conservation Area. This considered to be very inappropriate especially given the known need to replace or refurbish this building in the near future.

e. Seymour Court

These buildings, which are in the ownership of the City Council, are no longer fit for purpose and it is understood some that units have already been vacated prior to redevelopment.

f. Offices of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust

It is understood that these offices, located off Vinery Road, might also be redeveloped in the future.

In summary, these extensive redevelopment projects will inevitably and fundamentally impact on the character of the part of Mill Road/Brookfields within which they are located. It is therefore considered more appropriate that the north western boundary of the Conservation Area be along Vinery Road. It has already been shown in Section 1 of these representations why it is considered that, in any event, the development to the east does not conform to the overriding characteristics which are the reason for the proposed designation.

3. BUILDINGS ON BROOKFIELDS HOSPITAL SITE

It is noted in the appraisal that the buildings on the Hospital site are considered as two items which are discussed separately below.

a. Former Isolation Hospital

Two buildings remain from this date as identified on the Townscape Analysis 2 in the Appraisal. The question is whether this historic use justifies inclusion within the Conservation Area.

The Conservation Area Appraisal makes it quite clear what the defining characteristics of the proposed designated area are; that is, two storey houses in straight lines and of similar style and materials. The Hospital site does not confirm with this pattern.

The historic and architectural importance of the 19TH century hospital buildings is also questioned. It is significant to note that the Brookfields Hospital site was assessed by English Heritage when it undertook its schematic study of hospitals in the 1990s. In this study, the only element of the Brookfields site which is mentioned in the published volume was the X-shaped wing which was demolished in the 1980s. Interestingly, the Chesterton Union Workhouse which is described and illustrated in more detail has already need demolished.

The lack of significance of the buildings was noted in the Qube Report undertaken on behalf of NHS Cambridgeshire in September 2006 (Documents 5). It was concluded:

'6.04 The architectural interest of the ward and other buildings is not great due to their often very plain architectural style, their location deep within the plot and their single storey scale. The buildings have in many cases been altered to the detriment of their individual character.'

6.05 The loss of buildings at the north of the site has diminished any overall group value and our understanding of how the site developed up to the inter-war period. The alterations to the site boundary when the Health Centre was built has brought the wards closer to the site boundary than would have been permitted by the Local Government Board and therefore been detrimental to our ability to understand the original layout of the buildings.'

b. Mill House

The Qube report noted:

'It is clear that the most worthy building is the Mill House. This structure, although not the earliest on the site, is the one with the greatest architectural interest due to its use of materials and architectural detailing. Its size, scale and position in the streetscene also make it something of a local landmark.'

This assessment still stands. ASP has no proposals to remove or significantly alter the building.

If the LPA considers it to be so important in the street scene, there are other ways of protecting it such as Listing, rather than including it within a Conservation Area.

It should be noted that it is already protected by virtue of being noted as a Building of Local Interest.

4. COMMENTS ON PROPOSED CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY AT BROOKFIELDS

The proposed boundary within Brookfields does not appear to have been given detailed consideration.

The boundary is convoluted as it follows the footprint of Headway House and the Community Nurses Block.

The fact that the eastern boundary follows the footprint of the Health Centre which is known to be in need of either replacement or refurbishment, when finances are available, is also thought to be impracticable.

5. IMPORTANT TREES IN THE TOWNSCAPE

It is acknowledged that there are trees on the Brookfields Hospital site which contribute to the street scene.

However, as all these trees are already protected by means of a Tree Preservation Order, the Conservation Area designation is not necessary in respect of these trees.

6. CONCLUSION

On account of the impact of known redevelopment sites and the character of existing development from Brookfields Hospital to Brooks Road on the northern side of Mill Road/Brookfield, it is considered that there is no justification for, or benefit to be gained from, including the area as identified in Document 1 within the designated area. To do so would weaken the '*raison d'être*' for the Conservation Area which is otherwise founded on the sound premise of the integrity of the architectural character which should be preserved and/or enhanced.

It should be noted that these comments do not in any way relate to the proposed extension of the Conservation Area on the eastern side of Brooks Road.