

Report to:	Cabinet 5 th July 2021.
Lead Cabinet Member:	Councillor Dr. Tumi Hawkins, Lead Cabinet Member for Planning Policy and Delivery.
Lead Officer:	Stephen Kelly, Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development.

Conservation Area Review Programme including approach to Longstanton Conservation Area Review.

Executive Summary

1. South Cambridgeshire has 84 Conservation Areas; a Conservation Area is defined as ‘an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’. The purpose of a Conservation Area is not to prevent all development but rather to enable its careful management.
2. There is a statutory duty contained within S69 of the Planning Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990 upon Local Planning Authorities to review their Conservation Areas ‘from time to time’. (‘From time to time’ is generally viewed to be a period of approximately five years).
3. Over the years, Conservation Area reviews have been done as and when resources permitted. As such many of those in South Cambridgeshire are dated or have never been carried out. With the establishment of the Shared Planning service, a rolling programme of reviews is now being taken forward. This report sets out the criteria to inform prioritisation for the rolling programme.

4. The Council has also had a specific challenge in respect of the Longstanton Conservation Area review, which was undertaken in 2005. The challenge has been made by an applicant who is pursuing development within Longstanton Conservation Area. It was agreed that the Council would consider whether a further review of the Longstanton Conservation Area Appraisal and boundary would be appropriate or necessary at this time.

Recommendations

5. It is recommended that Cabinet endorses the criteria and approach for the rolling programme of Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans reviews (para 14-16 below), with the programme to be reviewed bi-annually.
6. Based upon the prioritisation work of the service, it is recommended that Cabinet confirms that it will not be prioritising a review of the Longstanton Conservation Area at this time.

Reasons for Recommendations

7. With so many Conservation Area reviews to be done it is important to establish criteria for approaching the review of Conservation Areas. The Shared Planning Service Conservation Team having developed a prioritisation approach do not consider that Longstanton Conservation Area is a priority for review in comparison with other Conservation Areas in the District which include those with older designations; those have never been reviewed; or are in a potential development area/corridor; or have been identified as being at risk.

Details

8. Conservation Areas are designated through the Planning Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990. Conservation area designation is undertaken to recognise areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. Designation can be in response to requests received and thoroughly assessed or in answer to the impact of development, neglect and other threats. The appraisal is the vehicle for understanding both the significance of an area and to enable the effect of proposals for change to be

considered having regard to the special architectural or historic interest of the area. It will form part of the local planning authority's Historic Environment Record and will be part of the evidence base for the local plan and a material consideration in planning decisions.

9. The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) stresses that 'local planning authorities must review their conservation areas from time to time' (section 69(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990). Resources permitting, every five years is ideal, but review frequency will vary according to a range of factors, including the specific development pressures in the local area and the capacity of the Council to undertake reviews.
10. With appropriate management procedures in place, the character and appearance of a conservation area would not normally change rapidly for the worse and a review might typically result in an addendum to an existing appraisal, recording what has changed, confirming or redefining the special interest that warrants designation, highlighting additional aspects that contribute to the area's significance or features newly identified as desirable to preserve or enhance, setting out any new recommendations; and revising the management strategy. In some cases, a review may result in de-designation of the area or alternations to the conservation area boundary – to enlarge or reduce the size of the conservation area having regard to specific circumstances.
11. Reviews may usefully be carried out on a regular basis by local community groups under the direction of Council's Historic Environment Team; for example, the review of Foxton Conservation Area was carried out in 2018 jointly with Foxton Parish Council, and in Cambridge, a number of reviews have been carried out jointly with volunteers from Cambridge Past Present and Future.
12. There are 84 conservation areas within the South Cambridgeshire, for which 22 appraisals covering 24 conservation areas have been adopted. Four Conservation Areas appraisal and management plans have recently been reviewed: Stapleford, Melbourn, Fulbourn village and Fulbourn Hospital. These have been reviewed, community consultation carried out (expired 15th February 2021) and the team have considered comments received,

amendments made with a view to seeking Lead Member approval shortly.

13. Given the need to prioritise the work of the team to reflect both the number of reviews/appraisals required and the available resource in the team it is proposed that the following criteria are adopted for prioritisation of the review/appraisals of conservation areas in South Cambridgeshire:
 - Conservations Areas where there is potential for significant development/ change in the short and medium term.
 - Conservation Areas “at risk” i.e. appearing on Historic England’s “Heritage At Risk Register”
 - Those areas with no appraisal or where the appraisal was conducted some years ago
14. In addition to the above, it is important to ensure there is local support for the work, as the team will be working closely with the communities involved, using local volunteers were possible.
15. In respect the first criterion (areas where there is potential for significant development/ change), officers have assessed that at present this is seen principally as the area to the west of Cambridge with the emerging plans for the East-West Railway along potential route from Sandy to Cambridge via Cambourne and the emerging plans for Oxford to Cambridge Arc. This emphasis will nevertheless be kept under review, for example, as the Joint Local Plan progresses.
16. For some conservation areas more than one of the above criteria apply.
17. Based on the above, the planned programme is set out in appendix 1 which covers the next 5 years. It is nevertheless suggested that this programme be reviewed every 2 years by officers - recognising that there is a need to plan for and work with communities and to offer some certainty to them about timescales and delivery.
18. As part of the prioritisation work in developing the programme, the service has given explicit consideration as to

whether a review of Longstanton Conservation Area needs to be undertaken at this point.

19. Longstanton Conservation Area, designated in 1987, is not one of the oldest designations and was reviewed in 2005. This was done at the time when the new town of Northstowe was being considered through the then Local Development Plan (local plan) process. The Longstanton Conservation Area appraisal is more recent than others in the district and whilst noting development at Northstowe itself, levels of change across the conservation area itself are not considered to have been so significant as to prompt immediate review having regard to the criteria above.
20. The Council's Historic Environment Team has reviewed both the process surrounding that designation and the accompanying appraisal that is currently in place and are satisfied it is acceptable and can continue to be used to inform decision making in the area.
21. In addition, the Council has also contacted Historic England and the Parish Council to determine their view on the need for immediate review. Historic England's Historic Places Adviser - East of England replied that:

“As you know, there is a statutory duty upon Local Planning Authorities to review their conservation areas ‘from time to time’. Ideally, ‘from time to time’ is generally viewed to be a period of roughly five years. I am aware that South Cambridgeshire presently has c.60 conservation areas that have been designated, but which do not have appraisals adopted. I would therefore suggest that, although the Longstanton appraisal dates from 2005, the preparation of appraisals for those areas without any form of supporting evidence base might be prioritised, but that an update to Longstanton's could be undertaken in due course as part of that wider programme.”
22. Longstanton Parish Council indicated that further to the meeting of Longstanton Parish Council “Councillors are of the opinion that the coverage of the Longstanton Conservation Area is adequate and there does not need to be a formal review of the area.” The view of both Local members have be sought; both are also satisfied with the suggested approach and the report's recommendation.

23. Considering all these factors, Officer's view is that there is not a case for prioritising Longstanton Conservation Area review at the present time.

Options

24. Cabinet could look to use other criteria to prioritise the review the District's Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans, and could decide to prioritise Longstanton Conservation Area.

Implications

25. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk, equality and diversity, climate change, and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered:
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Financial

26. The outlined programme of work set out in this report falls within the assessed capacity of the Shared Planning Service Conservation Team – based upon current funding and workload commitments. Any proposal to increase the number of appraisals would require additional resources or the re-prioritisation of the outcomes from the team.

Legal

27. Under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, there is a statutory duty upon Local Planning Authorities to review their conservation areas 'from time to time'.

Staffing

28. Conservation Area work will be undertaken by the Historic Environment Team working with local community volunteers wherever possible.

Consultation responses

29. As detailed in the report at para 21 to 23.

Background Papers

Historic England - Heritage At Risk Register

<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/conservation-areas-at-risk>

Historic England Advice note: Conservation appraisal, Design and Management.

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/conservation-area-appraisal-designation-management-advice-note-1/heag-268-conservation-area-appraisal-designation-management/>

Appendices

Appendix 1 Rolling Programme of Conservation Area appraisal and Management Review

Report Authors:

Christian Brady – Historic Environment Team Leader – Tel. 07514 925897

Jane Green – Built and Natural Environment Manager – Tel. 07519 294551

