

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO:** Conservation and Design Advisory Group  
Conservation, Sustainability & Community Planning Portfolio Holder

**AUTHOR/S:** Conservation & Design Manager

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12<sup>th</sup> July 2006

### CONSERVATION AREA DESIGN GUIDES

#### Purpose

1. To request that members of the Conservation and Design Advisory Group establish a small task/finish sub-group to meet with officers in order to review emerging drafts for new Conservation Area Design Guides over the coming year.

#### Effect on Corporate Objectives

2. Quality, Accessible Services	The Conservation Area Design Guides will be used as local design guides and, therefore, assist in achieving the Council's aim of improved development standards and the delivery of a high quality planning service. The completion of Conservation Area Appraisals, which inform the Design Guides are now a Best Value Performance Indicator for all district councils.
Village Life	The Conservation Area Design Guides will have a significant impact on the enhancement of village life by ensuring that new development in historic environments is both appropriate to its context and of demonstrable quality.
Sustainability	The Conservation Area Design Guides will provide a valuable resource in ensuring the delivery of new sustainable development.
Partnership	The Conservation Area Design Guides will be a useful resource for both the District Council and the relevant Parish Councils.

#### Background

3. Last year the, then Conservation Advisory Group, appointed a task/finish sub group comprising the Chairman, Vice-chairman and three other members to meet with David Grech, the Conservation Area and Design Officer and Shona Smith, Conservation Assistant. The purpose was to review the draft appraisals prepared by consultants on behalf of SCDC for the Conservation Areas at Fen Ditton, Bates Bite Lock, Swavesey, Horningsea and Tevesham, together with a draft appraisal for the proposed new Conservation Area at Little Gransden (the latter being prepared in house).
4. The outcome of this process resulted in a number of modifications being requested from the consultants' prior to embarking on public consultation on these new appraisals. There is a need to re-establish this group to look at the Conservation Areas Design Guides that will be prepared over the course of the coming year.

## **Considerations**

5. In the current year it is proposed to bring forward a further set of new Conservation Area Design Guides. It is hoped that funding will be available from within the Planning Delivery Grant to enable external consultants to again be appointed to assist in the preparation of the appraisals, though it is also planned to produce some appraisals 'in house'.
6. In order to avoid unnecessary delays in preparing these appraisals for public consultation it is desirable to have a small working party of members who can meet with the officers at mutually agreed times to consider the emerging draft appraisals. The consideration will include examining any recommendations for revising the boundaries of the Conservation Areas as well as the clarity and completeness of the documents and then presenting results to the Conservation & Design Advisory Group for recommendation to the portfolio holder and subsequent presentation to Cabinet for adoption as policy.

## **Options**

7. The Conservation & Design Advisory Group are requested to either :
  - a) Establish a small task/finish sub-group to meet with the officers to consider the emerging Conservation Area Appraisals;
  - or
  - b) To require officers to bring all emerging draft appraisals to the full Conservation & Design Advisory Group for consideration at their next appropriate meeting.

## **Financial Implications**

8. The production of the Conservation Area Design Guides is now a Best Value Performance Indicator, and, therefore, failure to sustain the programme will mean that Government set targets are not met and this may affect the funding of Planning Delivery Grant. It is proposed to meet the programme initially by commissioning consultants to provide the Design Guides using Capital funding from Planning Delivery grant. Confirmation of capital funding allocation will be reported to the meeting.

## **Legal Implications**

9. The Conservation Area Design Guides will include Management Proposals and Design Guidance tailored for each individual Conservation Area and are to be eventually adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document in support of the Local Development Framework and the statutory Local Plan.

## **Staffing Implications**

10. Members will be aware of the demands on the Conservation & Design Service resulting from the new development agenda, as well as the new targets emerging from Government to enhance delivery of such services. Given current staff resources the achievement of both conservation targets and the development agenda is only possible by making the best use of available skills, and in the short-term purchasing the Design Guides as completed tools from consultants.

### **Risk Management Implications**

11. The preparation of up-to-date Conservation Area Design Guides and Management Proposals has been selected by Central Government as a Best Value Performance Indicator. Requiring all draft appraisals to be tabled for consideration by the full Conservation & Design Advisory Group may result in delays in their production, resulting in the Council failing to meet the declared targets for new Conservation Area Design Guides in the current year. This might in turn impact on future Planning Delivery Grant allocations to this Council.

### **Consultations**

12. Following consideration by the sub-group and officers, the revised draft appraisals will be brought to the next appropriate meeting of the Conservation and Design Advisory Group to seek their agreement to undertake a consultation exercise on the draft appraisals. This process will include the local District Council Member(s), the relevant Parish Council, appropriate amenity bodies, department colleagues, as well as members of the public residing within the relevant Conservation Areas.

### **Conclusions/Summary**

13. Establishing a small task/finish sub-group to meet with officers basis is considered to be the most effective way of progressing the production of appraisals, while at the same time ensuring the emerging drafts are subject to adequate scrutiny.

### **Recommendations**

14. The Conservation and Design Advisory Group is requested to establish a small task/finish sub-group to meet with officers, as necessary, to consider emerging drafts for new Conservation Area Design Guides during the course of the year.

**Background Papers:** the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: None specific.

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