

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO: Cabinet	REPORT NUMBER: BCa/18/76
FROM: Councillor Tina Campbell, Cabinet Member for Environment	DATE OF MEETING: 7 March 2019
OFFICER: James Buckingham, Corporate Manager – Sustainable Environment	KEY DECISION REF NO. CAB112

ADOPTION OF CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISALS FOR BRENT ELEIGH, NAUGHTON AND GREAT WALDINGFIELD

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Members of the results of the public consultations on Conservation Area Appraisals for Brent Eleigh, Naughton and Great Waldingfield and to seek approval for the adoption of the documents as non-statutory Supplementary Planning Guidance.

2. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The Council has a statutory duty to review its conservation areas 'from time to time' (section 69 of Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990). The Cabinet is being asked to approve the adoption of the three conservation area appraisals.
- 2.1.1 Option 1: Approve the appraisal documents as presented in Appendices A, B and C.
- 2.1.2 Option 2: Require further work to the appraisal documents in Appendices A, B and C prior to adoption.

Both options above have been considered and the recommended option within this report is Option 1, to approve the documents as presented in the Appendices. Option 2 has not been recommended because the appraisal documents have been properly prepared and amended appropriately following public consultation and so further work is not considered necessary.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That the Conservation Area Appraisal for Brent Eleigh (Appendix A) be adopted as non-statutory Supplementary Planning Guidance with immediate effect.
- 3.2 That the Conservation Area Appraisal for Naughton (Appendix B) be adopted as non-statutory Supplementary Planning Guidance with immediate effect.
- 3.3 That following appropriate public consultation, the Corporate Manager, Sustainable Environment be authorised to amend the Great Waldingfield Conservation Area boundary as is proposed in the Appraisal in Appendix C, and subject to other minor consequential amendments, the document be adopted as non-statutory Supplementary Planning Guidance.

REASON FOR DECISION

To enable Planning decisions to be made with the best available background information.

4. KEY INFORMATION

- 4.1 A Conservation Area Appraisal sets out to define what is important about the area's character and appearance, describing its 'quality of place' so that we understand what it is we are trying to safeguard. It identifies the area's special features and changing needs through a process, which includes researching its historical development, carrying out a townscape analysis and preparing a character assessment. It thus becomes a vital tool for enabling the active management of the conservation area.
- 4.2 Babergh has 29 conservation areas in its district, most of which were originally adopted in the 1970s, each with a map and a somewhat limited single sheet of paper providing a brief description. To-date, 23 of the 29 conservation areas have been re-appraised. The current exercise will complete the set with the six remaining appraisals, three in this batch and three in the next (which will be presented to Cabinet later this year). It is considered prudent to bring these six appraisals up to the same standard as the others (and the 31 conservation areas in the Mid Suffolk district). The remaining appraisals have therefore been prepared following the same methodology used for the other 23 conservation areas. A revised methodology has recently been published by Historic England and some elements of this have been used for the three appraisals, but budgetary constraints have prevented full implementation.
- 4.3 There is no permanent staff resource for this area of work. The preparation of the draft appraisals has been contracted to Patrick Taylor, Conservation Architect, who formerly worked in the Babergh Heritage team. Options for the funding of a 'rolling programme' of re-appraisals to the latest methodology will need to be considered in the future.
- 4.4 Public consultation exercises were undertaken between April and June 2018. This included letters to the relevant Parish Councils, Babergh's local Ward Members, relevant internal departments, Suffolk County Council, Suffolk Preservation Society and Historic England, requesting their views on the draft appraisal and their proposals.
- 4.5 In addition, open evenings were held as part of the Annual Parish Meetings in April and May 2018 for members of the public to see the appraisals in exhibition format and give their views. The meetings were publicised locally. Approximately 12, 15 and 30 persons attended the Brent Eleigh, Naughton and Great Waldingfield parish meetings respectively. The appraisal documents were also made available online at both the Parishes' and Babergh's websites.
- 4.6 Historic England responded with a letter covering all three appraisals being considered at this time. They welcomed their production and considered the documents clearly written and well-illustrated, using large and clear photographs, helpful in illustrating particular elements of an area's character. They also said the appraisals set out the general character of the settlements well.

They would have liked to see more comprehensive photographic surveys and more detail on non-designated heritage assets (which might be covered by a Local List) along with such luxuries as a Management Plan or the implementation of Article 4 Directions, both of which are currently beyond the Council's limited resources. They also asked for additional detail on the villages' archaeology, but this is deliberately kept as a simple overview within the appraisal, as further information on this aspect is available from Suffolk County Council archaeologists who maintain and vet access to the Historic Environment Record, or from the further reading references given in the appraisals.

- 4.7 Suffolk Preservation Society (SPS) responded in a similar way with a letter covering all three appraisals being considered at this time. They consider that the most recent appraisal methodology (as discussed in paragraph 4.2) should have been used in full. They also recommended that the maps be updated and some of them combined to make them easier to interpret, which has since been done in all three appraisals. SPS also recommended the inclusion of several historic maps to show historical development of the settlements, but this 'map regression' analysis has been undertaken and the conclusions summarised in the appraisals. Other comments ask for greater detail on topography, archaeology, buildings, materials, spaces and planting. All of this is of course possible, but would require an expanded format for the document and many more hours of work than is affordable under the available budget. Much of the additional information is already available and can easily be found from the 'References and Further Reading' section on the last page of the appraisals, which from the outset describes itself as a 'general overview'. SPS recommended a review of the boundaries of the conservation areas as good practice. The boundaries were actually considered as part of the appraisal process, but in response to this recommendation explicit statements have been added to the appraisals for Brent Eleigh and Naughton to make it clear that the areas have had little change since they were designated, and the boundaries remain adequate for purpose. The Great Waldingfield appraisal recommends that the conservation area boundaries be extended to maintain the historic settlement's rural character.
- 4.8 No further consultation responses were received in respect of the Brent Eleigh and Naughton appraisals.
- 4.9 A credible suggestion was made at the open evening for Naughton that the area around neighbouring Nedging Church might be suitable for Conservation Area status. This is outside the boundary of the Naughton conservation area and so cannot be considered as part of its appraisal. However, the suggestion will be considered as part of the Council's on-going conservation management work.
- 4.10 Email responses to the Great Waldingfield consultation were received from the Parish Council, the two Babergh local Ward Members and eight members of the public. In general, these were supportive of the draft document, but a number of matters were raised, and additional information gleaned. The Parish Council supported the draft appraisal document and the idea of a future conservation area extension, a view re-iterated by the local Ward members and seven local residents.
- 4.11 The Appraisal documents as now presented for adoption have therefore been amended to take account of these various comments as far as possible and correct any other minor errors brought to our attention. Further public consultation on the precise proposed revised conservation area boundary for Great Waldingfield is however necessary.

5. LINKS TO JOINT STRATEGIC PLAN

- 5.1 The Appraisal documents shown in the Appendices will contribute to achieving the strategic priorities and outcomes of the Joint Strategic Plan through the following:
- 5.1.1 Helping to manage development to achieve the key objectives of economic growth and the provision of houses, whilst ensuring that there is not an unacceptable impact on our heritage or the rural distinctiveness of our district.
 - 5.1.2 Greater understanding and articulation of the character of our conservation areas, which can be used to develop a robust policy framework for planning decisions.
 - 5.1.3 Additional information made available by the appraisals should encourage better planning decisions and the better protection of our historic environment.
 - 5.1.4 Informing those considering investment in the area in guiding the scale, form and content of new development.
 - 5.1.5 Making best use of our existing housing assets.
 - 5.1.6 As educational and informative documents created with the local community, expressing what the community particularly values about the place they live and work in.
 - 5.1.7 As a tool to demonstrate the area's special interest.
 - 5.1.8 Promoting better understanding of archaeological potential, by identifying and mapping archaeologically sensitive areas and thus guiding development towards less sensitive locations.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 None.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Council has a statutory duty to review its conservation areas 'from time to time' and so could be subject to challenge if it fails to comply with this obligation.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 This report does not closely link with any of the Council's Significant Risks, however key risks are set out below.

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
Working on planning applications and appeals with inadequate and outdated (1970s) information	4 - Highly probable	2 - Noticeable	Adopt new appraisals as recommended
Council not fulfilling its duties to 'review from time to time' its conservation areas under section 69 of Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990	2 - Unlikely	3 - Bad	Undertake further conservation area appraisal work (29 in District)

9. CONSULTATIONS

9.1 Extensive consultation has been undertaken as detailed above in Paragraphs 4.4 – 4.5.

10. EQUALITY ANALYSIS

10.1 There are no equality and diversity implications arising directly from the conservation area appraisals and so an Equality Impact Assessment is not required.

11. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The additional information made available by the appraisals should have positive environmental impacts by encouraging better planning decisions and the better protection of our historic environment. Future decisions influenced by the appraisals would have particular positive benefits for heritage, landscaping and amenity within the conservation areas and surrounding communities.

12. APPENDICES

Title	Location
(a) Brent Eleigh Conservation Area Appraisal	Attached
(b) Naughton Conservation Area Appraisal	Attached
(c) Great Waldingfield Conservation Area Appraisal	Attached

13. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

13.1 Brent Eleigh Conservation Area Appraisal correspondence and working file
Naughton Conservation Area Appraisal correspondence and working file
Great Waldingfield Conservation Area correspondence and working file