

## **BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **PLANNING COMMITTEE**

**7TH MARCH 2011**

### **BROMSGROVE TOWN CONSERVATION AREA**

Responsible Portfolio Holder	Councillor Mrs. J. Dyer M.B.E.
Responsible Head of Service	Ruth Bamford Head of Planning and Regeneration Services
Non-Key Decision	

#### **1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

- 1.1 The Bromsgrove Town Conservation Area was originally designated by Worcestershire County Council in 1968 and was extended in 1983 and again in 1989. No formal review of the Conservation Area has been carried out since then, although a brief report on the merits of the area was prepared in 2007.
- 1.2 The Council has a statutory duty under s69(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to designate any areas which they consider to be of special architectural or historic interest as Conservation Areas, and under s69(2) to review such designations from time to time. The Council has a further duty under s71(1) to formulate and prepare proposals for the preservation and enhancement of its Conservation Areas.
- 1.3 A character appraisal and a set of management proposals including potential changes to the Conservation Area boundary, have now been produced in accordance with the guidance given by English Heritage. Although published by the Council, local amenity societies and residents are encouraged to contribute to and comment on the draft document and proposed boundary amendments during the formal consultation process which ends on 4th March 2011.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 This report is for information only, as approval of the proposed boundary amendments would be given at Cabinet level. Planning Committee Members are welcome however to make comments on the proposed changes and the draft character appraisal.

#### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The purpose of a Conservation Area character appraisal is to identify the factors and features which make an area special, based on an in-depth assessment of an areas buildings, spaces, evolution and sense of place. This is the first step in developing a management plan for the continued preservation and enhancement of a Conservation Area. An appraisal evaluates the positive, neutral and negative features of the area and suggests opportunities for improvement. It is not unusual for the boundary of a Conservation Area to fluctuate over time as the

area evolves, and an assessment of the current and potential boundaries is normally part of the appraisal process.

- 3.2 The Conservation Area review has highlighted some potential boundary changes to focus on the main retail area and the alleyways leading beyond. The first proposed amendment would remove the western section of Worcester Road beyond the Hanover Street junction, from the Conservation Area. This amendment is proposed because that section has a limited relationship with the centre of the Conservation Area and the few surviving historic buildings already have listed building status.

The second proposed amendment is to designate a separate St. Johns Conservation Area (which is currently included in the Bromsgrove Town Conservation Area boundary) in recognition of its unique character. A character appraisal for the proposed new St. John's Conservation Area is currently being prepared and shall be published for public consultation along with details of the proposed boundary extensions in March 2011.

- 3.3 A copy of the draft character appraisal has been attached to this report and includes a set of management and enhancement proposals under Appendix C. This is not an absolute list but outlines the main issues which need to be addressed and possible tasks and timescales. The main management issues it is felt need to be addressed are:

- Quality of the public realm
- Quality of shopfronts and signage
- Effective maintenance of historic buildings
- The increasing number of vacant retail units
- Vacant upper floors of historic buildings
- Advertising of the street market
- Marketing of the town's heritage
- Environmental improvements to Spadesbourne Brook

Policies TC4 and TC5 of the draft Town Centre Area Action Plan incorporate proposals to address some of these issues. The draft AAP is currently out for public consultation until 15th April.

#### 4. **KEY ISSUES**

- 4.1 The Strategic Planning team is currently carrying out a public consultation exercise to gather views on the proposed boundary amendments and the draft character appraisal. Consultation letters have been sent to every resident who would be removed from the boundary, and an exhibition displayed in the Customer Service Centre, the Council House and at 125 High Street in conjunction with the draft Town Centre Area Action Plan consultation. The deadline for comments to be submitted is Friday 4th March.

## 5. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The cost of producing and consulting on the Conservation Area character appraisal, and future costs involved in advertising the boundary amendments is being met by the existing Strategic Planning team budget.

## 6. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The proposed boundary changes to the Bromsgrove Town Conservation Area and the designation of a new St. John's Conservation Area requires formal approval by the Council's Cabinet. These changes would then need to be advertised in the Bromsgrove Advertiser and in the London Gazette, and notifications sent to DCLG, English Heritage and the Land Registry.

## 7. **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The Council has a statutory duty under s72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special regard to the preservation or enhancement of the character or appearance of a designated Conservation Area when assessing applications for development.

## 8. **COUNCIL OBJECTIVES**

### 8.1 **Objective 1 Regeneration: Priority 2 Town Centre**

The Bromsgrove Town character appraisal shall be used as part of the evidence base for Policy CP16 of the draft Core Strategy 2 and the draft Town Centre Area Action Plan, which in turn supports the Council objective to regenerate the town centre.

### 8.2 **Objective 2 Improvement: Priority 3 Customer Satisfaction**

The character appraisal will demonstrate the willingness of the Council to promote the regeneration of the town centre and will help address some of the negative comments received during the AAP Issues and Options consultation in 2008.

### 8.3 **Objective 3 Sense of Community: Priority 8 Community Engagement**

The main purpose of an appraisal is to highlight the importance of the historic environment and engage the local community in their cultural heritage. The draft appraisal has been made available on the Council's website, at the Customer Service centre and at the Council House to ensure that it reaches a wide audience. The historic built environment is often seen as a traditional and elitist subject and we hope to address this by providing a more inclusive and accessible conservation service to the local community.

9. **RISK MANAGEMENT INCLUDING HEALTH AND SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS**

9.1 **Risk Register:** Planning and Regeneration

**Key Objective Ref No.:** 5

**Key Objective:** Effective, efficient, and legally compliant Strategic Planning Service

**Key Control:** Carry out Conservation Area character appraisals and management plans in accordance with national planning guidance

**Action:** 5.6, Carry out Town Centre and Belbroughton Conservation Area appraisals

10. **CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 The public consultation has been carried out in line with current legislation and adopted standards contained in the Bromsgrove District Council Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).

11. **EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 None.

12. **VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS, PROCUREMENT AND ASSET MANAGEMENT**

12.1 All work related to the proposed boundary amendments, character appraisal and public consultation has been carried out by existing staff.

13. **CLIMATE CHANGE, CARBON IMPLICATIONS AND BIODIVERSITY**

13.1 The retention and repair of historic buildings harnesses their embodied energy and reduces the need for the production of new building materials and associated construction energy costs.

14. **HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS**

14.1 None.

15. **GOVERNANCE / PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

15.1 None.

16. **COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS INCLUDING SECTION 17 OF CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998**

16.1 None

17. **HEALTH INEQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

17.1 None

18. **LESSONS LEARNT**

18.1 Any lessons learnt from the conservation area review and public consultation process will influence proposals relating to other conservation areas in the future.

19. **COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

19.1 Consultation letters have been sent to residents of those properties which would be removed from the Conservation Area boundary, to English Heritage and the local amenity societies. An exhibition on the proposals was also displayed at the Customer Service Centre, the Council House and 125 High Street in conjunction with a wider consultation on the draft Town Centre Area Action Plan.

20. **OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT**

Portfolio Holder	Yes
Chief Executive	No
Executive Director - Planning, Regeneration and Housing Services	No
Executive Director - Section 51	No
Executive Director and Deputy Chief Executive	No
Director of Policy, Performance and Partnerships	No
Head of Planning and Regeneration Services	No
Head of Resources	No
Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services	No
Corporate Procurement Team	No

21. **WARDS AFFECTED**

21.1 St. Johns.

22. **APPENDICES**

Appendix A - Draft Bromsgrove Town Conservation Area Character Appraisal  
Appendix B - Bromsgrove Town Conservation Area Leaflet

**CONTACT OFFICER**

Name: Judith Carstairs, Conservation Officer  
email: [j.carstairs@bromsgrove.gov.uk](mailto:j.carstairs@bromsgrove.gov.uk)  
Tel: (01527) 881326