

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLANNING COMMITTEE

18TH APRIL 2011

ST. JOHNS CONSERVATION AREA

Responsible Portfolio Holder	Councillor Mrs. J Dyer M.B.E.
Responsible Head of Service	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. Initially defined as two sub areas, the St. Johns section became part of the town centre designation over time, despite a physical gap in the boundary between the High Street and St. John Street. The existing designation includes St John Street, St Johns Church and Churchyard, Perry Lane, part of Kidderminster Road and part of Crown Close. It is proposed that this be extended to include Bromsgrove Cemetery and some additional properties on Church Lane and Crown Close.
- 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 for the new St. John's Conservation Area including an explanation of the 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 22nd April 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 area's 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 recent review of the Bromsgrove Town Conservation Area highlighted some potential boundary changes to focus on the main retail area and the alleyways leading beyond. (A report on this was presented to the Committee on 7th March 2011). The designation and expansion of the St. Johns as an individual Conservation Area was identified as a possible revision. This was in recognition of the unique character of St. Johns and its distinct special interest, which is significantly different from the character and appearance of the Bromsgrove Town Conservation Area
- 3.3 The proposed St. John's Conservation Area has substantial historic and architectural interest, with some of the oldest surviving buildings in the town within the Conservation Area. The Church is a strong landmark feature for the town, and is supported by a collection of surrounding listed and unlisted historic buildings dating from the 17th to 19th centuries. The area as a whole has a leafy green setting which contributes to the local sense of place and establishes a positive relationship between the built and the natural environment
- 3.4 A draft character appraisal for the new St. John's Conservation Area has been prepared and attached to this report and includes a set of management and enhancement proposals under Appendix 1. 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:
- Ensuring that the redevelopment of the market site preserves or enhances the conservation area, and positively contributes to its setting;
 - Improving the quality of signage in the area, which should adhere to the Council's adopted supplementary guidance on shopfronts and advertisements;
 - Improving the condition of historic buildings and structures;
 - Maintenance of the trees and open spaces;
 - Environmental improvements to the Spadesbourne Brook.

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 within the proposed extended boundary, and an exhibition displayed in the Customer Service Centre. The deadline for comments to be submitted is Friday 22nd April.

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 separation of the Bromsgrove Town and St. John's designations and associated boundary amendments requires formal approval by the Council's Cabinet. It is provisionally programmed that this will take place in June 2011, following the public consultation period on the proposed St. John's Conservation Area boundary and character appraisal. The consultation period on the Bromsgrove Town Conservation Area amendments and character appraisal ended on 4th March 2011 and no objections were raised to the proposed separation into two designated conservation areas at that time. If the changes are approved by Cabinet the amended designations 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.
- 6.2 The proposed revised boundary of the St. John's Conservation Area would include Bromsgrove Cemetery which is managed by the Council. If the cemetery was included this would have no impact on the maintenance liability or the programming of burials. The only additional procedure applies to the complete removal of any pre-1925 gravestones or any of the boundary walls surrounding the cemetery which would need a special type of Planning Permission called Conservation Area Consent. Normally a notification of works to trees is required within conservation areas, but as the trees within the cemetery are managed by the Council this would be dealt with internally.

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

7.1 Objective 1 Regeneration: Priority 2 Town Centre

The St. John's 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.

7.2 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.

7.3 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 all properties within the revised Conservation Area boundary, to English Heritage and the local amenity societies. An exhibition on the proposals was also displayed at the Customer Service Centre during the consultation period.

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	Yes
Head of Resources	No
Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services	No
Head of Environmental Services	Yes
Corporate Procurement Team	No

21. WARDS AFFECTED

St. Johns

22. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Draft St. John's Conservation Area Character Appraisal
Appendix 2 - Proposed boundary map for the extended Conservation Area

23. CONTACT OFFICER

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