



## CABINET REPORT

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Wootton Conservation Area Re-Appraisal</b>
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**AGENDA STATUS: PUBLIC**

<b>Cabinet Meeting Date:</b>	<b>10<sup>th</sup> February 2010</b>
<b>Key Decision:</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Listed on Forward Plan:</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Within Policy:</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Policy Document:</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Directorate:</b>	<b>Regeneration and Growth</b>
<b>Accountable Cabinet Member:</b>	<b>Cllr Richard Church</b>
<b>Ward(s)</b>	<b>Nene Valley</b>

### 1. Purpose

- 1.1 To advise the Cabinet of the Council's duty to re-appraise Conservation Areas within the Northampton Borough administrative boundary. To inform Cabinet of the responses to a draft Wootton Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan.
- 1.2 To seek approval of the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan following amendments made as a result of public consultation. This includes amendments to the boundary of the Wootton Conservation Area.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that
  - The responses to the consultation and officer responses are noted.
  - The attached appraisal and management plan, including the proposed boundary amendments, be approved

### **3. Issues and Choices**

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#### **3.1 Report Background**

- 3.1.1 The Council has a statutory duty under section 69 and 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to designate as, and formulate proposals for, the preservation and enhancement of conservation.
- 3.1.2 The Statutory definition of a Conservation Area is an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. Local Planning Authorities have a duty to pay special attention to these objectives in the framing and implementation of their planning policies. Government and English Heritage advice supports the designation and protection of locally distinctive character. The character and appearance of Conservation Areas will vary greatly.
- 3.1.3 Character will be composed of a spectrum of factors which in combination and emphasis will be distinctive to that area - the result of the evolution of that area wrought by the many and varied decisions which have created its present form, given situation and original topography.
- 3.1.4 The intricacy and the richness of such an area will directly, though often subtly, reflect the length, nature and complexity of this evolution. The objective in the preservation or enhancement of a Conservation Area is to manage change in such a way as to recognise, safeguard and strengthen this character.
- 3.1.5 The Wootton Conservation Area was first designated on 24 March 1977 and the boundary has remained unchanged since that date.
- 3.1.6 Consultation took place on a draft Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan. The draft defines the special character of the area to make it worthy of Conservation Area status. It also identifies measures to maintain and enhance the identified character. The Conservation Area boundary defines the historic core of the former village of Wootton, which is characterised by many traditional buildings.
- 3.1.7 The draft appraisal proposed some alterations to the existing boundary. The purpose of the alterations is to include areas currently outside the boundary but which make a significant contribution to the character of the area. It also seeks to regularise boundaries to ensure it includes all of a building's curtilage or garden. See Appendix 1 for the proposed boundary changes that were consulted upon. Appendix 2 contains the consultation questionnaire.

#### **3.2 Issues**

- 3.2.1 A schedule of detailed responses, officer replies and resultant changes to the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan is included at appendix 3.
- 3.2.2 Currently the only amendment to the Conservation Area Boundary that has come about as a result of the consultation is a small change to the boundary

on the eastern side. The change has been made to include the entirety of 8 High Street. Furthermore there was also a minor amendment made to the text regarding 29 High Street (see attached letter and response in appendix 3).

- 3.2.3 Consultees were also asked about a name change for the Conservation Area from the 'Wootton Conservation Area' to the 'Wootton Village Conservation Area'. This was mostly supported with only 4 respondents not supporting the change. There have been no significant alterations to the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan document as a result of consultation responses.
- 3.2.4 There has been no significant alteration to the document as a result of consultation feedback. The principal issues identified through the consultation were:
- safeguarding the character of the area
  - emphasising the survival of the village
  - establishing a local identity for the boundary of the conservation area, for example, through signage
  - Reducing the impact of traffic upon the historic core
- 3.2.5 The final draft of the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, which accounts for amendments following consultation, is included in Appendix 4.
- 3.2.6 The key changes are:
- There is a small boundary change to the eastern side of the Conservation Area. This change has been made to ensure that the entirety of 8 High Street is included.
  - There is also a minor amendment made to the text regarding 29 High Street (see attached letter and response in appendix 3).
- 3.2.7 There were a number of other consultation responses that have been fully considered, but that have not resulted in any amendments. All the consultation responses and officer responses are detailed in Appendix 3.
- 3.2.8 Consultation responses include suggestions for additional buildings to consider for inclusion in the Conservation Area. Many of these are already Listed Buildings and as such they are afforded a high level of heritage protection. To accommodate some of these other buildings would also result in the inclusion of many mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings in between. These buildings importantly represent how Wootton has developed as a settlement over the years, but this new growth does not reinforce the character of the historic core of Wootton. It has been decided that these proposed extensions to the boundary are not included. This is to ensure that the unique layout and architecture of Wootton's historic core is identified and maintained through identification of a Conservation Area that includes examples of the very best and most significant elements, rather than being diluted with buildings and spaces of more generic character.

### **3.3 Choices (Options)**

- 3.4.1 The appraisal and management plan could either be

- a) Adopted by Cabinet with the changes made as a result of the consultation as recommended
- b) Adopted by Cabinet as above, but with other changes Cabinet feel are appropriate,
- c) Rejected by Cabinet either as a whole or in part.

3.4.2 **Option A** is considered the most appropriate action. It would provide the Wootton Conservation Area with a more detailed analysis and evaluation of its status enabling more informed statutory protection. It will give a more up to date evaluation of the special characteristics of the area that are deemed worthy of protecting or enhancing. The Management Plan will also assist in ensuring that the future of the area is appropriately protected and enhanced.

3.4.3 **Option B** could be considered appropriate if the changes suggested by Cabinet are regarded as sound and in accordance with best practice guidance with regard to appraisals and management plans.

3.4.4 **Option C** is not considered to be appropriate. There would not be an up to date Character Appraisal and Management Plan. This is inconsistent with national policy. It would weaken the Council's potential to carry out, to the best of its ability, the statutory duty placed upon it in seeking to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

#### **4. Implications (including financial implications)**

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##### **4.1 Policy**

The Council has a statutory duty to evaluate areas of the Borough for designation as conservation areas. There is a 5-year rolling programme relating to the re-appraisal of all existing conservation areas. It also has a duty to formulate proposals for their preservation and enhancement once designated. When undertaking the re-appraisal and formulating proposals for management, regard has been given to national guidance such as Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment and guidance published by English Heritage relating to conservation areas. The Northampton Local Plan: policy E26 is also relevant. The appraisals and management plans assist in considering the appropriateness of planning applications and potential future improvement works.

##### **4.2 Resources and Risk**

Re-appraisals and management plans form part of the remit of the natural and built heritage team. Therefore the fieldwork and consultation necessary to inform the documents is incorporated into existing resources. The Built and Natural Heritage team has a Conservation and Improvements budget which can be used to assist with the implementation of the management plan, but whilst this may contribute to some of the improvements, the majority of expenditure to effect change will be undertaken by third parties such as the Highway Authority.

##### **4.3 Legal**

Boundary amendments to existing conservation areas will require advertisement in the London Gazette and one local newspaper. Legal Services provide this service on behalf of the Council and they have been consulted on the proposal. The cost of advertisement will be met from existing budgets.

#### **4.4 Equality**

No equality and diversity issues have been identified relating to this report. An Equality Impact Assessment screening has been undertaken and approved. The opportunity to have copies of the document in large print, Braille, audiotape or translation to another language was provided

#### **4.5 Consultees (Internal and External)**

Consultation took place both internally and externally on the draft Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan. The consultation ran from 23 November 2009 to 18 January 2010. The period was extended to allow for the Christmas holiday period. A mail drop was sent out to 111 households, consisting of a leaflet highlighting the consultation and how to engage with it and a questionnaire. Consultation documents were also placed locally in the Parish Council Office, on the Council website, in the Central Library and in the One Stop Shop. Consultation documents were also sent out to key partners and stakeholders:

- local residents associations and amenity groups
- partner organisations (WNDC, English Heritage)
- Ward Members
- Portfolio Holder
- Historic Environment Champion

In total 20 questionnaires and 2 letters were received to the consultation. As there were no significant changes proposed and only 2 houses and 2 public buildings directly affected the approach is considered satisfactory.

#### **4.6 How the Proposals deliver Priority Outcomes**

Protecting the historic environment helps improve the quality of the environment, conserving Northampton's unique sense of place and identity. This can be regarded as being consistent with Priority 1 'we will help our communities become a safer, greener, and cleaner' and Priority 4 'we will promote economic development and growth in Northampton'.

#### **4.7 Other Implications**

None

### **5. Background Papers**

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#### **5.1 File 348/19 – Wootton Conservation Area**

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