



# Welwyn Village Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan

## Consultation Report

### Introduction

- 1.1 In October 2022, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council's Cabinet Parking and Planning Panel gave approval to consult on the Welwyn Village Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan.
- 1.2 This document was produced as a result of a review of the area by the Council's heritage consultant, Essex Place Services. The appraisal seeks to analyse the special architectural and historic interest of the Welwyn Village Conservation Area, identifies opportunities for beneficial change and the need for additional protection. The appraisal also reviews and amends the boundary of the Conservation Area, which was designated in 1969.
- 1.3 The review of the conservation area undertaken for Welwyn Village is part of a wider review of heritage assets within the borough.

### Process Followed

- 1.4 Following approval by an Executive Member Decision, public consultation was undertaken for an eight week period between 9<sup>th</sup> November 2022 and 6<sup>th</sup> January 2023, in line with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement.
- 1.5 Notification letters/emails were sent to owner/occupiers within the Welwyn Village area, local resident/interest groups and statutory consultees. Adverts were placed in two local newspapers and on the Welwyn Hatfield Brough Council website. In addition, consultation documents were placed at deposit points within the Parish and at the Council offices.
- 1.6 During the consultation period, respondents could complete an online survey, email comments to a specified address or respond by post. For consistency and to enable collation and analysis, all such responses were then entered online.
- 1.7 All responses are available in full on the Council's consultation portal available at: <https://welhat-consult.objective.co.uk/kse/event/37191>
- 1.8 A public meeting/drop-in session was held at the Welwyn Parish Council offices in November 2023, to allow local residents and those interested in the project to view the Character Appraisal and Management Plan and comment on the proposals.

## Consultation Responses

- 1.9 During the consultation period, a total of 24 responses were received; 18 from individuals who lived or worked in the area, two from local organisations (Welwyn Parish Council and the Welwyn Planning Action Group), and four from statutory consultees.
- 1.10 Of the four statutory consultees who responded, two were merely acknowledgements and had no wish to comment.
- 1.11 Overall, the document was well received and no comments were received in objection to the publishing of a Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan for Welwyn village.
- 1.12 The online questionnaire asked respondents two main questions:
1. Do you have any comments on the Conservation Area Appraisal (chapters 2 and 3)?
  2. Do you have any comments on the Opportunities for Enhancement and Management Proposals (chapters 4 and 5)?

### **Responses to Question 1**

- 1.13 Responses received relating to the content of sections 2 and 3 included comments on whether or not they agreed with the proposed revisions to the overall conservation area boundary, on the boundaries of the character areas within the conservation area, and minor corrections to details in the report.
- 1.14 Requests were made for additional detail to be included on non-designated heritage assets and archaeology/below ground heritage assets, inclusion of heritage assets and wildlife sites in the wider village area, and additional key views.
- 1.15 Regarding the proposed boundary changes, there were mixed views:

Generally agree with proposed boundary changes	5
Agree with parts of CA being removed but some should remain	4
CA boundary should be enlarged	12
Not commented	3
<b><u>Total</u></b>	<b><u>24</u></b>

- 1.16 Whilst a number were generally in agreement with the proposed removal of certain areas from the conservation area (including Historic England as

statutory consultee), some respondents did not (fully) agree with the proposed revisions to the conservation boundary.

- 1.17 Comments were received requesting that some of the areas identified for removal should remain within the conservation area, as well as a historic wall and listed milepost located on Church Street. Comments regarding the removal of additional areas were also suggested, such as part of the area around Lockleys Drive and car park.
- 1.18 The concept of enlarging the conservation area was also raised by 12 of the 24 respondents. Of these 12, 11 were in relation to the inclusion of the Danesbury Park Estate, an area to the north of the village.
- 1.19 In response to the representations received, Council officers, in conjunction with the Council's heritage consultant, Essex Place Services, have reviewed all of the comments regarding the boundary.
- 1.20 The NPPF (2023; para 191) sets out that, "*local planning authorities should ensure that an area justifies such status because of its special architectural or historic interest, and that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest*".
- 1.21 Where areas are still proposed to be removed from the conservation area, justification has been provided. Where an area is now to be retained within the conservation area, the boundary has been adjusted accordingly. This includes the historic wall and listed mile post on Church Street. Detail of these considerations is set out in section 2.5 of the report.
- 1.22 The removal of additional areas from the boundary such as near Lockleys Drive was considered but was not considered appropriate in this case.
- 1.23 Regarding the comments received requesting the expansion of the conservation area, it is noted that this could act to dilute the special historic and architectural interest of the area. In particular, expansion to include the Danesbury Park Estate would necessitate the inclusion of a large area of modern housing in the northern part of the village. For this reason, it was not considered appropriate to enlarge the conservation area to include the Danesbury Park Estate or other heritage assets further from the centre of the village.
- 1.24 However, the Danesbury Park Estate could be assessed to see whether it merits conservation status at a later date as part of the wider review of heritage assets within the borough.
- 1.25 Regarding the comments received on the internal boundaries of the conservation area for each of the character areas, these have been reviewed and amended where considered appropriate. The boundaries between Areas 2 (Historic Core), 4 (Allotments) and 5 (South of the River Mimram) have been adjusted slightly. The boundaries for Areas 1 (Manor House and West Manor) and 3 (Mill Lane and Mimram Road) have remained the same as the draft document. Detail is included in section 3.2 of the report.

- 1.26 The report has also been updated to include additional information on the areas identified in para 1.14 above and to correct minor inconsistencies and typographical errors.

## **Responses to Question 2**

- 1.27 Responses received relating to the content of section 4 and 5 included comments on additional detail to take into account in the management of the area. This related to matters such as tree maintenance, drainage, archaeology, building heights, transport policies, parking and the Welwyn heritage trail. Comments were also made that residents needed to be made aware of their obligations within a conservation area.
- 1.28 Council officers, in conjunction with Essex Place Services, have reviewed these comments and have included additional reference to the factors raised in paragraph 1.27 in relation to the management of the area. A Frequently Asked Questions section has also been added to the end of the report (section 6.5) to aide awareness of conservation areas and how property owners are affected.
- 1.29 Many of the responses from individuals or local groups referenced the need to prevent development in certain parts of the village or surrounding area.
- 1.30 Concerns were also raised that the areas removed from the conservation area would no longer be subject to the special controls currently afforded to them. Comments were made that future development could have an adverse visual impact on the remaining conservation area, in particular in relation to building heights/key views.
- 1.31 In terms of concern regarding future development in the area, conservation area status should not be used as a preventative measure to prevent development, but rather to preserve and enhance what is of historic architectural significance.
- 1.32 Guidance is clear that if areas of lesser or no special architectural or historic interest are included within the boundary, it can dilute the character of the area, making it more difficult to preserve or enhance the special interest within it.
- 1.33 When assessing proposals, design and heritage policies in the development plan require consideration of the character, appearance and setting, as well as the design, scale, materials and impact on key views. These policies are referenced in the CAAMP document. Additional wording has also been incorporated into the final Management Plan to state that new buildings should respect neighbouring buildings in terms of height and massing.
- 1.34 The heights/massing/forms of the buildings within the conservation area are fundamental aspects of the conservation area's character and appearance and any new development which does not respect this would be harmful to the area (including its setting).
- 1.35 For areas proposed for removal from the conservation area they would, in some cases, benefit from regaining national permitted development rights.

This would mean certain development/demolition could be carried out in these areas without planning permission.

- 1.36 However any permitted development which is likely to have a more significant impact on the neighbouring conservation area, such as additional storeys/increases in height, would still be subject to additional checks under the General Permitted Development Order, such as a prior approval process.
- 1.37 It is also noted that for some of the housing developments proposed for removal from the conservation area, there are conditions in place on a previous planning consent, limiting or removing permitted development rights. Therefore there is unlikely to be a significant adverse impact on the conservation area or its setting.
- 1.38 For areas proposed for removal from the conservation area, the protection of trees afforded due to conservation area status will also no longer apply. To ensure trees are adequately protected, a tree survey has been carried out by WHBC's Landscape and Ecology team. Where considered appropriate, additional protection (Tree Preservation Orders) have been put in place.

### **Public Meeting**

- 1.39 In accordance with Part II, section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, a drop-in session/public meeting was held in the Welwyn Parish Council buildings and was attended by Borough Council officers, Welwyn Parish Council officers and members of the public.
- 1.40 Points raised included discussion of the proposed boundary changes and reasons for removal of some areas from the conservation area, queries about which changes had been made to the draft document, and the need for further information/guidance for property owners within the conservation area, in particular relating to climate change/sustainability measures.
- 1.41 Responses to the queries on the boundary changes and amendments to the draft report are included in the above summary.
- 1.42 In terms of information for property owners (including in relation to climate change/sustainability measures), a Frequently Asked Questions section is included in the final version of the report. A summary of permitted development rights within conservation areas is included in Appendix 3 which accompanies the CPPP report.

### **Conclusion**

- 1.43 The responses received from the consultation and public meeting have been fully considered and the Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan has been updated in light of these comments where considered appropriate.
- 1.44 The final version of the document recommends removal of some parts of the existing conservation area to ensure ongoing preservation and enhancement of the special historic and architectural interest of the conservation area.

- 1.45 If agreed by Council members, the final version of the Character Appraisal and Management Plan will be adopted. This document will be used to guide future development in the area, and will be a material consideration in the assessment of planning applications.
- 1.46 The necessary statutory and best practice processes will also be actioned to make the proposed amendments to the designated conservation area boundary.