

Part I

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WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL  
CABINET PLANNING AND PARKING PANEL – 6 OCTOBER 2022  
REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (PLACE)

WELWYN VILLAGE CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL AND  
MANAGEMENT PLAN

**1 Executive Summary**

- 1.1 Under national planning policy and advice by Historic England, Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) are required to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas. LPAs should also consult the public and take account of views expressed.
- 1.2 A review of the Welwyn Village Conservation Area has taken place. The review has been undertaken by the Council's heritage consultant, Essex Place Services. The appraisal and management plan is included as Appendix A. The appraisal identifies potential changes to remove areas where designation may no longer be justified.

**2 Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1 That the Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel (CPPP) recommend to Cabinet that the Draft Welwyn Village Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan undergo public consultation for a period of six weeks.

**3 Explanation**

- 3.1 Welwyn village historic core Conservation Area was designated in 2007; there is a map of the conservation area extent, but there has been no accompanying Character Appraisal or Management Plan. Appendix B contains a map of the existing conservation area.
- 3.2 The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) stresses that 'local planning authorities must review their conservation areas from time to time' (section 69(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Resources permitting, it is advised that every five years is ideal, but review frequency will vary according to the development pressures in the local area. Conservation Area Appraisal and Management document provide as baseline information for applicants to consider when designing or planning new development in Welwyn.
- 3.3 The assessment that has been undertaken follows best practice guidance, including Historic England's revised Historic England Advice Note 1 for Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management (2nd Edition 2019) and The Setting of Heritage Assets (2nd Edition 2017).
- 3.4 The draft 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 draft appraisal also seeks to consider and review the Conservation Area boundary which has been in place since 2007.

- 3.5 The review of the Welwyn Village Conservation Area and the production of the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan are part of a wider aim by Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council to preserve or enhance the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area as required by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. It will also enable sustainable decisions to be taken about its future management.

### **Analysis and proposal**

- 3.6 The draft appraisal sets out key elements which define the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area. This includes:
- Built Environment
  - Topography
  - Land Usage
  - Key Views
  - Landscaping, Open Spaces and Public Realm
  - Traditional/Local Building Materials and Details
  - Beyond the Conservation Area Boundary (significance from the wider landscape)
- 3.7 Several examples are used to highlight the special interest.
- 3.8 The next section of the draft appraisal assesses in some detail character areas. Most Conservation Areas do not have a uniform character and appearance across the area. In many cases different 'character areas' or 'sub areas' can be discerned which have their own unique appearance and characteristics. Their varied character tells a story about the history of the Conservation Area and contributes to the special character and appearance of the whole. Seven distinct Character Areas have been identified for the Welwyn Conservation Area.
- Area 1 – Manor House and West Manor- draws its character from its use as an eighteenth century rectory, with its associated gardens and grounds
  - Area 2 – Village Core - characterised by its dense historic built development, with the central St Mary's Church, its commercial buildings and inns, and its unusually wide street which is reflective of its historic use as the Great North Road
  - Area 3 – Mill Lane and Mimram Road - its current character is derived from its dense pattern of nineteenth century development along the narrow streets, including a number of workers' cottages and terraced houses
  - Area 4 – Allotments - draws its significance from its large area of open land, formed by the allotments, and the dispersed settlement around them
  - Area 5 - South of the River Mimram - draws its significance from the river itself and its residential development, which is grander in scale and set within larger plots, orientated towards the River Mimram
  - Area 6 - Welwyn Hall Gardens - comprises the modern development of Welwyn Hall Gardens and Church Place to the north east of the conservation area

- Area 7 – Parkside - a modern development to the south east of the conservation area dating to the mid-1980s
- 3.9 These character areas are shown in appendix A, section 3.
- 3.10 The next section of the draft appraisal sets out issues that make a neutral contribution to the area character and identifies opportunities for enhancements. Issues in this section include:
- Car Parking
  - Loss of Architectural Details
  - Treatment of Boundary Walls
  - Access and Integration (suggested enhancement of wayfinding)
  - Inappropriate Modern Development
  - Neutral Contributors of several buildings
  - Public Realm (including street furniture, hard landscaping, open space, trees and planting)
- 3.11 Section 5 recommends proposals for the management of the conservation area, it is split into both short and long term management proposals. It should be noted that many of these positive management tools are being applied already.
- designation of non-designated heritage assets which have been recognised as buildings of local architectural or historic interest (these are identified in Section 2.7 of the appraisal)
  - as necessary using Local Planning Authority enforcement power in reinstating any lost character or architectural features
  - general maintenance of public realm and highways
  - requiring Heritage Statements, Heritage Impact Assessments and Archaeological Assessments for applications for new development
  - continued tree management, recognising that trees that are either located in a conservation area or covered by a Tree Preservation Order or planning condition already have a degree of protection
  - that any future development be mindful of the local character of the conservation area, while at the same time addressing contemporary issues such as sustainability and seek schemes which enhance the built environment (draft Local Plan policies SADM15 and SP 9)
  - publishing of resources aimed to inform property owners and members of the public to communicate the significance of the area and ensure members of the public are aware of the implications of owning a property within a conservation area
  - that the conservation area should be reviewed regularly to monitor change and inform management proposals. That boundary should be assessed as part of this review to ensure it is robust and adequately protects the significance of the area (the appraisal and management plan is doing this).

## **Boundary change**

- 3.12 The NPPF (2021) states that “When considering the designation of conservation areas, 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”.
- 3.13 The appraisal suggests that the boundary of the area is reviewed to ensure it adequately reflects the area’s special architectural and historic interest. Some areas which could be considered for removal from the conservation area boundary are:
- Parkside – modern housing development to the south east of the area
  - Riverside – modern development to the north west of the area
  - Welwyn Hall Gardens and Wendover Lodge – housing development to the north east
  - St Mary’s Close – small close of modern housing in the north west of area
  - Ellesfield - twentieth century bungalows
- 3.14 A plan showing the recommended boundary changes is attached as Appendix B.

## **4 Proposed Consultation**

- 4.1 It is proposed that the Draft Welwyn Village Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan undergo public consultation for a period of six weeks. The consultation will take place online using the Council’s consultation portal and notification letters will be issued to key stakeholders, as per the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).
- 4.2 The appraisal suggests several potential boundary changes to remove modern development from the existing conservation area designation. Views on these proposed changes will be posed as consultation questions. The results will be presented to Council prior to any revision being made.
- 4.3 Undertaking consultation will increase the weight attached to the Character Appraisal and Management Plan as it will allow the communities views to be considered and any necessary revisions made prior to adoption of the document.
- 4.4 **Next Steps**
- 4.5 Following the consultation, the appraisal will be amended as required and together with a summary of the representations received be reported to CPPP ahead of progressing to Cabinet and a meeting of Council.

## **Implications**

## **5 Legal Implication(s)**

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications associated with this report. The Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan will be a material planning consideration. Following public consultation there are no legal notices or advertising required to adopt the appraisal as a statutory planning document, subject to the Council’s own policies being adhered to (Historic England Conservation Area Appraisal Designation and Management Advice Note 1 (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) 2019).

## **6 Financial Implication(s)**

- 6.1 There are no financial implications arising directly in relation to this report. The cost of consultation will be met through existing budgets.
- 6.2 Consultation on a boundary change (a reduction) is proposed. Should the conservation area be reduced, the areas no longer in the conservation area would, in some cases, gain permitted development rights. This would allow certain works to be carried out without a need for planning consent, any subsequent resource saving, for instance in the form of officer time is diminutive.

## **7 Risk Management Implications**

- 7.1 There are no risk management implications arising directly in relation to this report. However, having an up to date Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan helps to protect the conservation area from inappropriate development.

## **8 Security and Terrorism Implication(s)**

- 8.1 There are no security and terrorism implications arising directly in relation to this report.

## **9 Procurement Implication(s)**

- 9.1 There are no procurement implications arising directly in relation to this report.

## **10 Climate Change Implication(s)**

- 10.1 No climate change implications have been identified resulting from this report.

## **11 Human Resources Implication(s)**

- 11.1 There are no Human Resources implications arising directly in relation to this report. Consultation will be managed by the planning policy and communications teams.

## **12 Health and Wellbeing Implication(s)**

- 12.1 There are no specific health and wellbeing implications associated with this report.

## **13 Communication and Engagement Implication(s)**

- 13.1 This report seeks approval to consult on the Draft Welwyn Village Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan. The consultation will take place online using the Council's consultation portal. The Planning Policy Team will work with the Communications Team to manage the consultation process.

## **14 Link to Corporate Priorities**

- 14.1 The subject of this report is linked to the Council's Corporate Plan, in particular Priority 4: A sense of community where people feel safe - Design and maintain attractive neighbourhoods which our communities can enjoy and take pride in.

## **15 Equality and Diversity**

15.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) was not completed because this report does not propose changes to existing service-related policies or the development of new service-related policies.

### **12 September 2022**

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**Background papers:** None

### **Appendices**

Appendix A: Welwyn Village Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan

Appendix B: Map of potential conservation area boundary changes to be consulted upon