

REPORT FOR DECISION

Agenda Item	
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MEETING: PLANNING CONTROL COMMITTEE

DATE: 19 FEBRUARY 2008

SUBJECT: AINSWORTH VILLAGE CONSERVATION AREA.
APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN.

REPORT FROM: BOROUGH PLANNING, ENGINEERING, AND
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES OFFICER

CONTACT OFFICER: M NIGHTINGALE, CONSERVATION OFFICER

TYPE OF DECISION: Executive key decision

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION/
STATUS:** This paper is within the public domain

SUMMARY:

This report presents an appraisal of the Ainsworth Village Conservation Area and the main proposals for a management plan. This action is in line with Best Value Performance Targets and good practice guidance in community consultation.

OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDED OPTION (with reasons):

The options are as follows:

- (a) To reject the consultant's report and the core proposals listed in part 5 of the report.
- (b) To accept the consultant's report and the core proposals listed in part 5 of the report, and the additional investigations outlined in the conclusions, part 7 of the report.
- (c) To accept the consultant's report and to amend the core proposals.

Option (b) is recommended for the following reasons:

- (1) The appraisal is the result of a detailed study of the area's history and architectural character.
- (2) The broad management plan responds to the issues raised in the appraisal and the community consultation.

- (3) The broad management plan identifies areas of additional work to be undertaken together with interim arrangements.

IMPLICATIONS -

Corporate Aims/Policy Framework:

Do the proposals accord with the Policy Framework? Yes

1. Developing a stronger community spirit.
2. Improving transport and the environment.
3. Bury MBC's Heritage Strategy.
4. PPG15 Planning and the Historic Environment.
5. Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Financial Implications and Risk Considerations

Statement by Director of Finance and E-Government:

The Council's revenue budget includes a limited amount of funding (£6k) for works in conservation areas, in addition to the officer post. In recent years this budget has been supplemented by Planning Delivery Grant which cannot be assumed to be ongoing funding. The work proposed in this report to develop a management plan for the conservation area will mainly involve existing staff time. However any implications for work to be done by the Council included in the management plan needs to have due regard to the level of resources in those services expected to undertake works.

Equality/Diversity implications Considered by Monitoring Officer:

No

Are there any legal implications?

No

Staffing/ICT/Property:

There are no implications for the Council's land and property holdings arising directly from this report.

Wards Affected:

Scrutiny Interest:

Appraisals and management plans have previously been discussed at scrutiny committee.

TRACKING/PROCESS**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:**

Chief Executive/ Management Board	Executive Member/ Chair	Ward Members	Partners
No		Directly since October 2007, and through Radcliffe LAP 23 January 2008	Community consultations and partnerships with interest groups since 2006
Scrutiny Commission	Executive	Committee	Council
Process included in reports to Economy, Environment and Transport Scrutiny Commission in 2004 and 2006	No	This report	

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Ainsworth Village Conservation Area was designated in 1973 and has not been reviewed or its boundary adjusted since that date. However, the Conservation Area formed an important part of the work of the Ainsworth Community Association during the preparation of the Village Design Statement, which was published in January 2007. It is considered by Government and English Heritage to be good practice to undertake a detailed assessment for the whole of the Borough's conservation areas. This is done in two phases for each area, a character appraisal followed by a published management plan. From 2005/06 this area of work has contributed to the Council's Best Value Performance Indicators. Consequently, the Council has established a programme of appraisals and management plans. Consultants have been engaged to produce an appraisal and to put forward recommendations for a management plan for Ainsworth Village. With the assistance of the community association, the local community was consulted on the consultant's report during October 2007, and the results of the appraisal and the consultation were put forward for comment to the Radcliffe Area Partnership in January 2008. The Best Value performance targets include for the completion of an appraisal and management plan for Ainsworth by the end of March 2008.
- 1.2 The Council's current priority is to produce appraisals and management plans in line with the current programme. Unfortunately, this means that there is limited officer resource to implement the plans. However, every effort will be made to protect and enhance the conservation area within the resources available.

2.0 ISSUES/BACKGROUND/CONSULTATION

- 2.1 This report summarises the results of the area consultation that took place during October 2007 and which sought feedback on the conservation area appraisal and action plan report prepared by consultants. A course of action is now recommended in response to the consultant's report and the consultation comments received.
- 2.2 The consultant's report has been placed on the Council's website since September 2007. Please consult this for a full version of the report (www.bury.gov.uk/environment/landandpremises/conservation/conservationareas/conservationareaappraisal).
- 2.3 On the 5 October 2007 the Council delivered letters to every property within the boundary of the existing and proposed Conservation Area, summarising the appraisal and action plan and explaining the proposed arrangements for consultation. A questionnaire accompanied the letter. In addition to the information on the website, copies of the consultant's report were made available in Ainsworth Library, and a drop-in session was arranged for residents to discuss the report with the Council's Conservation Officer at the Old School Room on the 24 October 2007. Representatives of the community association attended the drop-in session and also distributed 750 leaflets in the village. In total approximately 900 invitations were issued.
- 2.4 The area residents were asked to complete and return the questionnaire, and/or to give any comment verbally or via letter or e-mail. The drop-in session was not well attended, and in total 8 responses were received from the properties within and around the conservation area. In addition, the community association has submitted a range of comments. This report has also been copied to every property within the existing and proposed conservation area.
- 2.5 The submission of the draft of this report to the Local Area Partnership meeting is another part of the consultation on the consultant's work. Feedback in the form of a petition was received from Well Street residents after the LAP meeting.

3.0 SUMMARY OF APPRAISAL AND ACTION PLAN

- 3.1 The following is a summary of the main points of the consultant's report.

The report is divided into a number of main parts.

- A. The report assesses the area's history and the detail of its special architectural character. It considers the origins and development of the area and the particular elements of the area that make it special. These issues are considered in some detail. Within this, the boundary of the conservation area is checked to see if it correctly reflects the area of special interest and character. The consultants have recommended areas to be added to the current conservation area.
- B. Based on the assessment of the area's character, it considers factors, which have a positive, negative and neutral impact on the conservation area. From this overall assessment come policies and proposals for the control of development and alterations to building, and ideas on

how the public areas could be enhanced. This is referred to as the Action Plan.

C A summary of the main conclusions and recommendations for action is as follows.

§ The positive features which contribute to the area's special character are –

- The significant buildings, largely those that are listed but also buildings such as the old school room, the White Horse PH and the early 19th century club houses
- The contribution of the large number and range of walls, gateposts, railings and boundary details
- The rural character of unmade roads and paths
- The large formal green spaces within the village, many containing memorials and links with the past and a source and record of social history.
- The extent of mature tree and shrub planting and the variety of open or controlled views of the surrounding countryside
- Particular building materials, features and details reflecting the local vernacular architecture

§ The negative features which act against the area's special character are seen to be –

- The change in the village's physical structure that has resulted from post war housing development
- The impact of the car on traffic flows and in the streets within the village, together with the intrusion of the resulting traffic control measures
- loss of traditional paving materials
- the impact of modern communications on the appearance of buildings through aerials, satellite dishes and telephone wires
- pockets of out of character building development
- the culmination of the out of character extension and alteration of buildings, partially resulting from the change from rental to owner occupation, and its impact on the unity of terraces and the basic character of the village

§ Policies are put forward aimed at achieving the following –

- The protection of views and vistas including the importance of the open land to the north and the range of vistas involving significant buildings
- Greater consideration of the area's traditional character in the future design, improvement and management of the highway system and associated materials, street furniture and signage
- The protection of open spaces from development and the retention of mature trees
- Recognition of the value of boundary walls, gates etc around the village and both their protection and restoration

- The production of guidance assisting with the correct repair and maintenance of stone and brick walls, and the retention and restoration of traditional windows, doors and building details
- Guidance on the location of satellite dishes, aerials and alarm boxes
- Encouraging the more sympathetic design of infill development in and around the conservation area.
- To restrict normal permitted development rights for house owners to alter windows, doors, roof and to erect walls and small extensions
- Resisting the demolition of buildings that contribute to the character of the area
- Providing an interpretation of the village's history and character through information boards in the area
- The extension of the conservation area to include The Delph, parts of Greenside, Stanley Terrace and Victoria Street.

4.0 CONSULTATION RESPONSE TO APPRAISAL AND ACTION PLAN

4.1 The consultation questionnaire asked both general and specific questions and also requested any additional detail and comments that the residents wished to make. The areas covered were; the broad proposals put forward by the consultants including the boundary extensions; the stricter planning controls proposed; detailed design guidance; the format and usefulness of the report, and the appropriateness of the consultation process. The value of the responses at the time of the consultation has been diminished by the fact that only 8 questionnaires were returned. It is difficult to reach conclusions on such a small information base. However, there was support for the production of the consultant's work, their proposals and the consultation process. At this stage there was also some support for the removal of permitted development rights, but with two objections to this course of action. Questions were also raised and these will be addressed in a further letter to area residents etc after the full consideration of this report.

4.2 Individual **comments from the community** covered –

- Questioning the cost of engaging consultants
- The consultant's work and the additional controls are too late as the character of the area has already been damaged
- Stronger enforcement action should be taken, particularly if additional controls are brought in
- The Council should provide written guidance to help local residents to understand and respect the area character
- Concern over design and appearance of road markings and street furniture
- Concern over the level and speed of traffic through the village
- Specific concern from the Methodist Church over the proposed inclusion of the Church and grounds in the conservation area

4.3 After the Radcliffe Local Area Partnership meeting on the 23 January 2008 the conservation officer was handed a petition from the residents of 9 properties on Well Street. This raised concerns particularly over the restriction of permitted development rights and the reference in the report about the upgrading of unmade roads. The petition rejects the core proposals

within the officers' report, but in discussion it became clear that the concerns were about pressure from the Council to remove legally installed windows, which would not be the case.

4.3 The **Ainsworth Community Association** has submitted comments at various stages of the consultation and has also included issues as part of the village design statement work. These are : -

- § Add Knowsley Cottages and Coronation Terrace to the conservation area
- § Support the Village centre/Green project and enhance the area
- § The Council to upgrade unadopted side streets
- § A need to control parking in front gardens
- § Concerns over a lack of planning enforcement
- § Need to control the addition of porches to terraced properties
- § Concern over the loss of character through the use of steel flues, satellite dishes, upvc ventilation pipes and the loss of chimney stacks
- § Request for consideration of high quality upvc windows as timber frames can lead to failure of double glazing systems
- § Request for guidance to be issued on the appropriate paint colours for rendered walls
- § Highlighting inaccuracies and incorrect comments in the consultant's report

As part of the earlier work on the Village Design Statement the community association stated that development within the Conservation Area should be in sympathy with the area's character; should reflect traditional scale, design, materials and architectural details, and should retain boundary walls, trees and hedges. At that time the association also considered that the Council should review the Conservation Area boundary and provide clear advice to area residents.

5.0 OFFICER COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 The Council engaged consultants to provide the necessary expertise and approach to produce an appraisal based on broad guidance from English Heritage and best practice. The community consultation produced a very limited response, and did not generate strong objections to the current proposals, until the petition was received after the local area partnership meeting. Some recommendations outlined below are similar to those already approved as part of other conservation appraisals, and others are less straightforward and require examination. Comments from the community association can also be considered in this way.

5.2 Those recommendations put forward by the consultants or resulting from the consultation and that are common to other approved appraisals and generally accepted as being good practice are as follows -

- (i) Protection of views and vistas into and out of the conservation area, and based upon a photographic survey and prepared guidance.
- (ii) Protection of open spaces within the conservation area and recognition of the area's intrinsic character in their management and improvement.

- (iii) To encourage the retention and use of traditional window and door patterns, chimneys and rainwater goods, and, following an audit in the area, produce guidance covering these matters and issues such as satellite dishes and the maintenance and repair of walls and renders.
- (iv) The production of guidance for new development and extensions and alterations to existing buildings within and around the conservation area, to ensure that both the pattern and detail of development enhances or protects the area's character. (Interim guidance can be added to the published management plan as was done in the case of All Saints Conservation Area)
- (v) Careful control of the alteration of commercial building and signage and the adoption of the advice in the Council's Shop Fronts and Signs booklet to the conservation area.
- (vi) Resistance to the removal of listed buildings and those buildings identified as making a positive contribution to the area's character, and the strict application of the tests for demolition proposals outlined in Planning Policy Guidance 15 (issued by central government).
- (vii) A general presumption to protect trees and hedges and require appropriate replacement planting when trees are lost.
- (viii) General presumption against the cladding of buildings and the use of inappropriate walling materials.
- (ix) Production of interpretation boards and leaflets outlining the history and special qualities of the area.
- (x) In addition, the Council operates a grant system that is primarily designed to support the repair of listed buildings at risk. The annual budget is currently £15,000. Small grants can help to reduce the difference between a basic cost for building work and, on occasion, when there is an additional cost due to the nature of materials, bespoke construction or the standard of workmanship involved. In response to the proposal to consider increasing the level of control over the extension and alteration of dwellings (see paragraph 5.3(2)), it is proposed that this grant is also made available for work to property in the conservation area. This is possible through the same legislation as for listed buildings. There are also matters of detail such as the level of grants, priorities, grant conditions and criteria, and selection of work and standards, that will need to be clear and approved. It is proposed that officers draw up a grant scheme for all of the Borough's conservation areas based upon the listed building grant regime and the previous Heritage Economic Regeneration Schemes, and that this becomes operational on approval of the scheme by the Director of Environment and Development Services.

5.3 Other recommendations put forward and issues raised through the consultation require some investigation and comment.

- (1) The proposals recommend extensions to the conservation area. The community association has also put forward possible extensions but

there has also been concern expressed over the inclusion of the site of the Methodist Church and school. The Greenside area is an early part of the village and this is reflected in a clearly identified 18th/19th century group of buildings which, in comparison to many parts of the conservation area, are well preserved. The buildings within the Methodist Church site are later but are of local architectural interest and contribute to the character of the village and the local scene. Open spaces are seen to be important to the character of the area and Methodist church yard, boundary gates and walls, and site are part of this. The inclusion of this area meets the criteria established by government guidance and English Heritage and it is a little surprising that it was not included at the time of the 1973 designation. The case for inclusion outweighs the Methodist Church's concern over the implementation of planning controls. The consultant's propose the inclusion of the Delph, a former quarry, area of water and now an area open space. Again, this is part of the open space structure, character and history of the village's development and inclusion is justified. Two terraces are also put forward; Victoria Street (late 19th century) and Stanley Terrace (1911). Although Victoria Terrace has been altered it is consistent in quality and appearance with other properties along Church Street and it is within the core of the village and relates to the main street frontages and the area's setting. Its inclusion (in association with other policies put forward) should help to protect the character at the core of the village. The community association has also put forward Coronation Terrace and Knowsley Cottages for inclusion. Knowsley Cottages are some 440 metres away from the conservation area separated by new development and open land. Although the cottages are of significant age and some merit, best practice recommends that conservation areas should be centred on cohesive groups of buildings and not spread out along tentacles away from the core. Such an isolated extension should not be supported. Coronation Terrace is on Church Street, just to the east of the Delph away from the village centre. It is built in red brick and has the same date and character as Stanley Terrace. These two terraces are marginal in terms of their special quality and contribution to the character of the area, and Victoria Terrace is set away from the core of the conservation area. Officer's view at the moment is that these terraces should not be included within the revised boundary.

- (2) The consultant's recommend that the Council introduce additional control over the alteration and extension of dwellings through the approval of what is referred to as an Article 4 Direction. This recommendation is based on concerns over the gradual erosion of the character of houses and terraces in the village. Indeed it is hard to find an original, early or even non-upvc window in some terraces, and it is particularly sad that parts of the area are significantly less well preserved than those in unprotected villages in the Borough. There have also been extensive alterations to external doors, some alterations such as porches and bay windows, and, in one or two instances, changes which have altered the shape of window openings. Roof materials have been altered; chimneys have also been removed and replaced with steel flues. Alterations to hardstandings and walls have also had a detrimental impact on the area's character. The community association supports additional control and there has been

virtually no response (other than the petition submitted on the 23 January 2008) to the proposal from the local community. The point may have been reached where any further loss of area character will raise the question of the credibility of parts of the conservation area and whether the designated area should contract to cover just the core of the village around the listed buildings. Alternatively, such changes from now on could be brought under control and the character of the area slowly retrieved. Officer's view is that there is enough of the basic structure and character of the unlisted buildings left to build upon. However, until such time as there is detailed design guidance and a finally approved grant system, it may be premature to impose additional controls. It is accepted that the work on this package of actions has become more urgent as the programme of appraisals has progressed.

Also, further consultation with the community association has resulted in the request for consideration of high quality and traditionally convincing upvc frames, as timber can cause failure of the double glazing units. Officers could not recommend the use of pseudo-timber upvc frames, and the construction and detail of many types on upvc frames are unconvincing. Recently, factory sprayed/painted upvc frames have become available, and if these are to the correct pattern and design there is no reason why they cannot be used within the Conservation Area. More work is required to fix on best practice in this area.

- (3) The consultants, the community association and the community have commented on the issue of traffic, the condition of unadopted highways and the obtrusive nature of street furniture and traffic calming measures in the village. There are significant areas of unmade roads within the conservation area. In some ways these are part of the area's character, and it is understood that there are different views in the village about the value of improving these highways. The Council, in its capacity of highway authority, does upgrade and adopt unmade roads, and this is done to a priority list identified by agreed criteria. However, in normal circumstances the riparian owners need to contribute towards the cost of the work. Some investigation of the upgrading of Knowsley Street around the Unitarian Church and the Stables is underway. Any such work should be in appropriate materials in line with the area's traditional character, and this may lead to cost increases over and above a standard specification. In this context the scale of funding required from the highway authority to meet the upgrading of the roadways in the village may be above what can be justified, and may also be different from the established priority list. The Council's engineers have also pointed out that the highway maintenance budget for the Borough is reduced year on year. The small amount of conservation monies that could contribute to the costs would make little difference. External grant funding for the work can be investigated and the production of the appraisal and management plan should normally assist in the justification of applications.

Certain aspects of the street lighting and traffic calming measures are seen to be contrary to the area's character. The coloured marking on Church Street is seen to be detrimental to the appearance and feel of

the village. It is understood that these markings do wear off and it is considered that a different form of marking and traffic calming would be feasible and that this could be less harmful to the area's environment. It is recommended that in due course alternative measures are discussed and agreed with the community association. However, the cost of changing street lighting and highway surfaces would be prohibitive and could only be justified if external grant covered the majority of such costs.

6.0 COMMENTS FROM THE RADCLIFFE AREA PARTNERSHIP

- 6.1 Discussion at the Radcliffe Local Partnership meeting on the 23 January 2008 centred on the issue of the area boundary, and also how the development of certain sites might be restricted by Conservation Area status. Concern was expressed that Knowsley Cottages were not proposed for inclusion in the Conservation Area, and that the Methodist Church was to be included (please refer back to 5.3 (1)). Whilst it was accepted that the cottages were some way away from the Conservation Area boundary, the possibility of them being a satellite/annex to the Conservation Area was put forward. Such an arrangement would be very unusual but there is nothing in the relevant legislation to restrict it, or the designation of a separate Conservation Area covering the terrace. The final decision is for the local planning authority to take. However, there are other small building groups around the village, such as Ainsworth Hall Farm, Plane Trees Farm and Dearden Fold which are also of architectural or historical interest. Should these also be considered for protection in the same way, or as part of a much extended Conservation Area? Committee may decide that this question should be investigated further. The justification for deleting the Methodist Church/School from the proposed extension is that inclusion would stop plans to better link and use the school and the Church buildings. This would not be the case. If such a proposal met general planning policies, the existence of the Conservation Area would ensure that design and character issues were fully addressed rather than being a reason for resisting the principle of alteration. It is important that the Methodist Church and School included within the Conservation Area.
- 6.2 The partnership meeting also asked for new residents moving into the area to be informed of the existence of the Conservation Area and the implications of this for them. The local authority search will identify the status of the area at the time a house is purchased and the solicitor should pass on the information. In addition, on the printing of the management plan for the Conservation Area, copies can be made available to the community association for distribution throughout the area and when new residents move in.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 That the proposals outlined in part 5 of the report be accepted to form the future Management Plan to be published for the Ainsworth Village Conservation Area. The published management plan may include additional information not referred to in this or the consultant's reports and designed to assist in the understanding and implementation of the proposals.

- 7.2 That officers investigate the satellite settlements located around Ainsworth Village and consider the best means of their conservation and protection.
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List of Background Papers:-

1. Report to Radcliffe Area Partnership at its meeting on the 23 January 2008.
2. Draft report for consultation prepared by AHP Ltd January 2007
3. Ainsworth Village Design Statement - Planning For the Future. January 2007.

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