

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE - 3 JUNE 2014

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING
AND TRANSPORT

WATTON-AT-STONE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND
MANAGEMENT PLAN

WARD(S) AFFECTED: WATTON-AT-STONE

Purpose/Summary of Report

- To enable Members to consider the Watton-At-Stone Conservation Area Appraisal following public consultation.

<u>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXECUTIVE:</u> That	
(A)	the responses to the public consultation be noted and the Officer responses and proposed changes to the Watton-At-Stone Conservation Area Appraisal be supported;
(B)	authority be delegated to the Head of Planning and Building Control, in consultation with the Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Transport, to make any further minor and consequential changes to the Appraisal which may be necessary;
(C)	the Watton-At-Stone Conservation Area Appraisal be supported for adoption.
<u>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUNCIL:</u> That:	
(A)	the responses to the public consultation be noted and the Officer responses and proposed changes to the Watton-At-Stone Conservation Area Appraisal be agreed;
(B)	the Watton-At-Stone Conservation Area Appraisal be adopted.

1.0 Background.

1.1 East Herts has a rich environmental heritage which includes 42 Conservation Areas. The East Herts Local Plan commits the Council to review its Conservation Areas, a requirement which is also set out in national legislation.

1.2 The review of Watton-At-Stone's Conservation Area is the one of a series of reviews commenced in 2012/2013. These reviews have been presented for Members consideration at a number of meetings of the Executive. This is the latest. In each case a report is being presented after a public consultation exercise has been undertaken in relation to each individual settlement.

1.3 Each document identifies the special character of the respective Conservation Area together with the elements that should be retained or enhanced and those which detract from the identified character. Existing boundaries will be reviewed and, where appropriate, practical enhancement proposals will be suggested.

1.4 Once Members have considered each Appraisal, and the document has been adopted by the Council, they will become a 'material consideration' in the process of determining planning applications.

2.0 Watton-At-Stone Conservation Area Appraisal

2.1 Watton-At-Stone's Conservation Area was designated in 2000. The Watton-At-Stone Conservation Area Appraisal was completed in 2013. There was an initial period of public consultation during November 2013. A further consultation was undertaken at the request of the Parish Council in April 2014. Two public meetings were held on 13 November 2013 and 7 March 2014 at which about 30 members of the public were in attendance. Responses were received from the Parish Council, the Woodhall Estate and from several local residents, in addition to other points which were raised at both public meetings. The headline issues are set out in the following paragraphs:

2.2 *General content of Appraisal:* The Appraisal sets out a revision to the Conservation Area boundary to exclude several late 20th century dwellings to the rear of the High Street, off School Lane and Old School Orchard and the land west of Ponderosa and the Moat House, Perrywood Lane. It identifies the key environmental

features and the manner in which they can be controlled. In relation to Watton-At-Stone the most relevant ones are: Listed Buildings including structures in their curtilages; non listed buildings of quality worthy of protection; other unlisted distinctive features worthy of protection and important open land and spaces.

- 2.3 *Listed buildings and structures in their curtilages:* These are protected by legislation and have been identified in the Appraisal. Some are in a poor condition and these have also been identified in the Council's recently updated Buildings at Risk Register. It is considered important their condition improves. Potentially this could occur through the planning process or possibly from grant assistance. Officers will approach owners as Members agreed when considering the Buildings at Risk Register.
- 2.4 *Non listed buildings of quality worthy of protection:* A small number have been identified that make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area and these should be retained through the planning process.
- 2.5 *Other unlisted distinctive features worthy of protection:* A number have been identified and mainly include walls. These are important to the rural qualities and character of Watton-At-Stone. Most are protected by virtue of being within the curtilages of Listed Buildings or above prescribed heights (which means that it is necessary to seek permission before demolition is undertaken). However some are unprotected in law from demolition. Protection could formally be achieved through the introduction of an Article 4 Direction. Prior to considering such a course of action, the Council will seek to establish ownership and discuss the matter further with respective owners.
- 2.6 *Important open land and spaces:* The Appraisal has identified a number of such important open spaces that materially contribute to the character or appearance of the Conservation Area that should be protected through the planning process.
- 2.7 *Enhancement proposals to deal with detracting elements:* A number have been identified and include untidy sites, discordant signage and structures in need of repair. It is accepted that such improvements will often only be carried out with the co-operation of owners and other local bodies and organisations. However the District Council may have a role to play in some instances, for example by offering technical advice; by determining applications

and where appropriate offering grant assistance.

3.0 Consultation Feedback

- 3.1 The Parish Council 'supports the efforts to preserve and protect important features within the village'. However they have a reservation regarding changing the boundary to exclude Old School Orchard and in particular no. 4 as the building comprises the virtually intact original school hall where many residents received their primary education. The general support of the Parish Council is encouraging and the process of identifying and subsequently achieving physical improvements, implemented at local level, however small, is important,
- 3.2 Other comments received through the consultation process are set out in the table included as **Essential Reference Paper B** arranged in the subject order set out above.
- 3.3 **Essential Reference Paper C** is a copy of the Watton-At-Stone Conservation Appraisal and Management Plan as it appeared at the consultation draft stage with track changes to show how the final document will appear.
- 3.4 In summary it is recommended that the Watton-At-Stone Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan be adopted and be used in the process of determining planning applications.
- 4.0 Implications/Consultations Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper A**

Background Papers

None

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