

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE - 7 OCTOBER 2014

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR STRATEGIC
PLANNING AND TRANSPORT

BISHOPS STORTFORD CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL
AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

WARD(S) AFFECTED: BISHOP'S STORTFORD ALL SAINTS,
BISHOPS STORTFORD CENTRAL, BISHOPS
STORTFORD MEADS, BISHOPS STORTFORD
SILVERLEYS

Purpose/Summary of Report

- To enable Members to consider the Bishop's Stortford Conservation Area Appraisal following public consultation.

<u>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXECUTIVE: That</u>	
(A)	the responses to the public consultation be noted and the Officer responses and proposed changes to the Bishop's Stortford 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 Bishop's Stortford Conservation Area Appraisal be supported for adoption;
<u>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUNCIL: That:</u>	

(A)	the responses to the public consultation be noted and the Officer responses and proposed changes to the Bishop's Stortford Conservation Area Appraisal be agreed;
(B)	the Bishop's Stortford 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 Bishop's Stortford's Conservation Area is one of a series of reviews undertaken in 2013/2014. These reviews can now be presented for Members consideration at a number of meetings of the Executive. This is the latest. In each case a report will be presented when 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 have been reviewed and, where appropriate, practical enhancement proposals have been 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 The Bishop's Stortford Conservation Area Appraisal

2.1 The Bishop's Stortford Conservation Area was first designated in 1968 and subsequently redesignated in 1981 and 1997. The Conservation Area Appraisal was completed in 2013 and the Draft Appraisal went through a period of

public consultation from February until April 2014, with a public meeting held on 26 February.

There was a second Supplementary Consultation Exercise that was in relation to: (a) a new extension at Warwick Road proposed by respondents during the first consultation process; (b) notifying owners of additional non listed properties principally identified by respondents as being important and (c) consulting owners of selected properties in the extensions to the Conservation Area as recommended by the Draft Appraisal because the latter document did not identify individual non listed buildings of quality to be retained in these areas nor their important features. This latter exercise was undertaken from June until July 2014 with an additional public meeting being held on 26 June. A number of responses to both consultations were received including those from the Town Council, Civic Federation and from local residents in addition to other points submitted at the 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 include sections of Warwick Road, Maple Avenue, Charles Mellows swimming pool at Bishop's Stortford College, Thornfield Road, Chantry Road, Dunmow Road in two locations, London Road, Stansted Road, Foxley Drive, Grange Road, South Road and Apton Road Cemetery. It identifies the key environmental features and the manner in which they can be controlled. In relation to Bishop's Stortford 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. Two 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 in March 2013.

- 2.4 *Non listed buildings of quality worthy of protection:* A great number have been identified that make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area and these should be retained through the planning process. Many of these non-listed residential buildings have good quality architectural features of high quality whose formal protection could 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.
- 2.5 *Other unlisted distinctive features worthy of protection:* A considerable number have been identified and include walls and railings which are important to the character of Bishop's Stortford. Most of these are protected by virtue of being within the curtilages of Listed Buildings or above prescribed heights (which means that it is necessary to seek consent before demolition is undertaken). There are other features of note such as industrial equipment, fountains, flights of steps and commemorative memorials and plaques.
- 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:* Many have been identified and include boundary walls in need of repair, damaged signage and untidy sites. 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. The Town Council has expressed support for a number of suggested improvements proposed by the Appraisal and has already taken some action and promised other. This is most encouraging.

3.0 Consultation Feedback

- 3.1 The Town Council thanked East Herts District Council for including them and local residents in the consultation period and for holding a public meeting. They found the documents interesting and provided a number of comments which have been considered further. The general support of the Town Council is encouraging and the process of identifying and subsequently achieving physical improvements, implemented at local level, however small, is important.
- 3.2 The Bishop's Stortford Civic Federation generally considers the Appraisal to be 'sensible and sensitive' and the organisation wants to work jointly with EHDC to ensure preservation and enhancement. This is to be welcomed and officers have suggested a meeting in support of this idea. They support the identification of non listed buildings of importance but suggest additional ones (several of which have been included) and also suggest further extensions to the Conservation Area.
- 3.3 A summary of comments received through the consultation process are set out in the table included as **Essential Reference Paper B**.
- 3.3 **Essential Reference Paper C** is a copy of the Bishop's Stortford Conservation Appraisal and Management Plan as it appeared at the consultation draft stage with track changes that incorporate the necessary changes and the new text associated with the Supplementary Consultation exercise. Further minor changes will be incorporated reflecting the status of the final document once Members have considered it for adoption.
- 3.4 In summary it is recommended that the Bishop's Stortford 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

Contact Member: Cllr Mike Carver – Executive member for
Strategic Planning and Transport
mike.carver@eastherts.gov.uk

Contact Officer: Kevin Steptoe – Head of Planning and
Building Control, ext 1407
Kevin.steptoe@eastherts.gov.uk