

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE - 7 FEBRUARY 2017

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR DEVELOPMENT
MANAGEMENT AND COUNCIL SUPPORT

HERTFORD CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND
MANAGEMENT PLAN

WARD(S) AFFECTED: All Hertford wards

Purpose/Summary of Report

- To enable Members to consider the Hertford Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan following public consultation.

<u>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUNCIL:</u> that	
(A)	the responses to the public consultation be noted and the Officer responses and proposed changes to the Hertford Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan be supported;
(B)	authority be delegated to the Head of Planning and Building Control, in consultation with the Executive Member for Development Management and Council Support, to make any further minor and consequential changes to the document which may be necessary; and
(C)	the Hertford Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan be supported for adoption.

1.0 Background.

1.1 This matter was reported to the Executive meeting on 6 December 2016. At that meeting and following a

representation from Councillor P Ruffles a decision was deferred so that further consideration could be given to the Conservation Area boundary at Tamworth Road.

- 1.2 Officers have undertaken that further review and conclude the revised conservation area boundary as previously proposed remains appropriate and that further amendments to include properties on the northern side of the road should not be undertaken. Councillor Ruffles has been informed of the outcome of officer's considerations of this matter.
Further details are set out in section 3 below.
- 1.3 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.
- 1.4 The review of Hertford Conservation Area is one of a series of reviews being undertaken and this is a recently completed one for consideration.
- 1.5 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 are reviewed and, where appropriate, practical enhancement proposals are suggested.
- 1.6 Once Members have considered each document and it has been adopted by the Council, it becomes a 'material consideration in the process of determining planning applications.
- 2.0 The Hertford Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan.
- 2.1. Most importantly the Town Council (TC) advise in their response they wish to meet with the District Council to consider what role it might play in assisting to implement some of the Enhancement Proposals. **Their offer of co-operation in this respect is most welcome.**
- 2.2 The Hertford Conservation Area was first designated in

1967 and reviewed in 1981 and again in 1996. This Appraisal document was completed in 2015 and went through a period of public consultation from 1st June 2016 to July 13th 2016 with a public meeting held on 1st June 2016 at the Mill Bridge Rooms, Hertford at which about 25 persons attended. About 20 representations from individuals and organisations were received. These representations (approaching 100 issues) covered a wide range of matters and identified other minor detailed points of accuracy, receipt of which has been much appreciated. The headline issues are set out in the following paragraphs.

2.3 The document as revised following consultation considers the conservation area boundaries and proposes a number of alterations. These are:

Extend to east of existing conservation area to include Nos. 6-102 Tamworth Road, Fairfax Road and Nos. 97-159 Ware Road.

Exclude the following areas: Nos. 9-12 Grove Walk; site to south west corner of Gascoyne Way and London Road which includes Post Office building and residential element of Gwynns Walk; site to corner of Ware Road and London Road which includes Yeomans Court, The Rotunda, Stag House, WVRS building and EHDC car park; Preview, Watersmeet, Orchard Cottage and Nos.1-7 Hillside Terrance and adjacent land to west of No. 7; Nos. 1-8 Albion Close and adjoining garage block north west corner of Currie Street and properties Nos. 16-24 Railway Place and a small area to south of Ware Road to better reflect existing geography.

The draft appraisal originally suggested the exclusion of open land to the north of Mangrove Drive (emerging District Plan site Hert 5 identified for residential development) and also Ashbourne Gardens and properties on Mangrove Road. However following consultation and for reasons set out in Essential Paper B, these areas are no longer proposed for exclusion at this time. It is recommended their inclusion within or exclusion beyond the conservation area be reviewed once, as is most likely, development has taken place on Hert 5. At this time a significantly more accurate

assessment will be possible.

- 2.4 The document identifies the key environmental features and the manner in which they can be controlled. In relation to Hertford 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.
- 2.5 *Listed buildings and structures in their curtilages:* These are protected by legislation and have been identified. Three listed buildings are on the Council's Heritage at Risk Register. There are a number of 20th century listed buildings that are particularly important.
- 2.6 *Non listed buildings of quality worthy of protection:* A very large number have been identified that make a positive contribution to the conservation area and these should be retained through the planning process. Some 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. The Council has agreed the principle of introducing such a pilot Direction.
- 2.7 *Other unlisted distinctive features worthy of protection.* A number have been identified and include walls and railings and other features which are important to the character of the town.
- 2.8 *Important open land and spaces.* The following particularly important open spaces have been identified: River courses throughout and Hertford Basin; churchyard, Church of St Andrew; Castle grounds; Moat Garden; Hertford Millennium Sculpture open space; Holy Trinity churchyard; open space north of Beane Road; open space west of Millmead Way; St Leonards Garden; St Leonards churchyard; Hartham Common; Bengo Sports Association ground, New Road; churchyard of Our Lady and St. Joseph; open land between Queens Road/ Mangrove Road; All Saints churchyard; treed area, north east side of Mangrove Road; Bowling Green near EHDC offices; playing field south of Richard

Hale School; open land to the west of County Hall; open land east of Railway line, centred on Hertford Town football ground. Also included is tree lined southern end of Queens Road. These open spaces will be protected.

- 2.9 Trees play a particularly important role in many locations both within and adjacent to the open spaces and within the built up part of the town as well. Of particular note is publically accessible tree lined southern end of Queens Road.
- 2.10 *Enhancement proposals to deal with detracting elements.* A considerable number have been identified and as previously advised Hertford TC has enquired very positively to ascertain what role they might play in undertaking aspects of these tasks. The proposals cover a very wide range from introducing small improvements through to much more strategic issues such as improving Gascoyne Road car park and Maidenhead Street. It is worth noting several recommendations of this appraisal independently coincide with some set out in the 2015 Urban Design Strategy.
- 2.11 *Other significant proposals.* Several potential areas of redevelopment are proposed or suggested worthy of further consideration. Comprehensive improvement of All Saints churchyard, well used by the public, is recommended and a successful outcome to this would be very positive indeed.
- 3.0 Reconsideration of the Conservation Area boundary in the Tamworth Road area
- 3.1 At their Executive meeting on 6th December 2016 Members considered the Hertford Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan and instructed officers to reconsider a suggestion by the Town Council which sought to extend the conservation area for part of the northern side of Tamworth Road.
- 3.2 Background: The Town Council had suggested Nos. 1- International House is included in an extended conservation area. The officer's report advised that on balance this was considered inappropriate.

- 3.3 In Executive Members' debate on 6th December 2016...
Councillor P Ruffles...suggested that further consideration be given to the proposed exclusion of some properties on Tamworth Road. He believed that residents were entitled to a better understanding of the reasons for treating apparently similar properties in a different manner.
- 3.4 This section attempts to provide such information.
- 3.5 The Hertford Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan properly states that in suggesting boundary revisions *principle consideration is given as to whether or not the land or buildings in question form part of an area of special architectural or historic interest whose character or appearance should be conserved.*
- 3.6 Buildings within such areas of quality and worthy of protection are identified and the appraisal document offers advice regarding such assessments. One question asked in this respect is *has the building retained its original scale without large inappropriate modern extensions that destroy the visual appearance particularly in respect of the front elevation?*
- 3.7 Analysis: Nos. 1-3A Tamworth Road are already in the conservation area. They are modern buildings and in themselves are not of special quality. Of yellow brick construction with slate roofs they were erected on a linear narrow plot. They can best be described as neutral but at least have common unaltered window detailing. The appraisal document acknowledges that such neutral buildings will exist throughout the conservation area and there will be situations, particularly in a large urban area, where boundaries cannot be sensibly redrawn. In this case the site is located on the corner of Raynham Street (completely in the conservation area) where a redrawn boundary excluding this small area might be regarded as somewhat contorted and unnecessary.
- 3.8 The conservation area as proposed is extended along the southern side of Tamworth Road so the qualities of Nos. 5 through to International House on the northern side need to

be compared with the former to answer the question raised.

- 3.9 Properties on the southern side proposed for inclusion. This consists of Nos. 6-102 being a significant 'run' of 47 late 19th/early 20th century dwelling houses of various types. Some 66% of these have been identified as being *other non-listed buildings that make an important architectural or historic contribution* and having sufficient qualities to be considered candidates for an Article 4 Direction removing householder Permitted Development Rights (PD). It is accepted that some inappropriate changes have been made including replacement windows and some alterations to historic recessed entrances. Importantly however within this long range of properties the fieldworker could only identify one protruding porch.
- 3.10 Properties on the northern side the subject of this consideration. These consist of two distinct areas. Firstly Nos. 5-27 and secondly, International House.
- 3.11 Nos. 5-27 principally date from the early 20th century where some inappropriate detailing including window replacements have been undertaken. Applying the same principles and making similar observations the fieldworker considers some 33% of properties could reasonably be identified as being *other non-listed buildings that make an important architectural or historic contribution* and having sufficient qualities to be considered candidates for an Article 4 Direction. This is a considerably less proportion when compared collectively with the included area on the south side of the road.
- 3.12 Additionally and importantly the most disruptive elements here are a number of modern porches of different types which represent a concentration of visually inappropriate features. There are however two pairs of properties, separately located in the group (Nos. 11-13 and 25-27) that the fieldworker considers are sufficiently unaltered to merit consideration for protection by an Article 4 Direction.
- 3.13 International House. This property is being converted to flats with a significant extension to the rear. The front elevation probably dates from the early 20th century with

hipped slate roof. Its window range to the street is pleasing and repetitive. As flats and being a change of use from commercial to residential International House does not enjoy Householder PD rights and is administered by normal planning controls whether within or beyond the conservation area. Therefore from a development management view point its inclusion would serve no purpose.

- 3.14 Overall summary: The proportion of dwellings (excluding the International House conversions to flats from the equation) on the northern side of Tamworth Road of architectural/historic merit is considerably less (33% as compared to 66% on the southern side). The southern side of the street proposed for inclusion is generally and collectively more harmonious.
- 3.15 The other key visual difference between the two areas is the concentration of different porches on the north side of Tamworth Road. These are particularly disruptive and protrude to varying and different degrees and damage the overall visual historic appearance of this group's front elevation.
- 3.16 Officers therefore consider the original view expressed in **Essential Reference Paper B** is correct. If Members were minded two selected pairs on the northern side of the road could justifiably be made subject to an Article 4 Direction subject to further consideration and notification (the making of such a Direction is not restricted to conservation areas).



Pictures for comparison. In the fieldworkers' opinion dwelling houses on the south side of Tamworth Road are generally and collectively more harmonious (upper picture). In comparison note the disruptive impact of porches to the overall front elevation of properties of similar age opposite on the northern side of the street (lower picture).

4.0 Implications/Consultations

4.1 Information on any corporate issues associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**

4.2 A summary of comments received through the consultation process and officer responses are set out in the table is included as **Essential Reference Paper B.**

4.3 **Essential Reference Paper C** is a copy of the Hertford Conservation Appraisal and Management Plan as it appeared at the consultation draft stage with any subsequent track changes to text and alterations to accompanying plans that incorporate any necessary changes. Further minor changes will be incorporated reflecting the status of the final document once Members have considered it for adoption.

Background Papers

Written representations received through the consultation process.
<http://democracy.eastherts.gov.uk/mglIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=19471&PlanId=245>

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