

# REPORT TO PLANNING AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

## CONSERVATION AREA REVIEWS



**Report Reference** PL-21-03  
**Meeting Date** 21<sup>st</sup> February 2022  
**Agenda Item** 9  
**Prepared by** Town Clerk

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### 1.0 BACKGROUND

Following the adoption of the Knutsford Neighbourhood Plan in 2019, the Town Council set out to meet its commitment to:

*Work with Cheshire East Council and local heritage groups and organisations to review all of the Town's Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plans and Article 4 Directions in order to ensure that all are up to date, are reflective of the existing built environment and are relevant in the continued protection and enhancement of these heritage assets.*

In 2019 the council sought quotes to appoint a consultant to undertake reviews of the conservation areas and prepare an updated appraisal document and management plan. A consultant was chosen at a cost of £12,375 for reviewing the five conservation areas and the first review, for the Legh Road Conservation Area, commenced in 2020.

The review was impacted by COVID affecting access to the county records office and by a lack of engagement from Cheshire East Council. A draft of the appraisal was completed in 2021 by which point engagement from Cheshire East Council had improved with the return of a member of staff who had been on maternity leave. Cheshire East Council has committed resource to progressing the formal consultation and adoption of the reviews for the Legh Road, St John's and Town Centre conservation areas over the next year. The Legh Road Conservation Area appraisal and management plan will be progressed for public consultation by Cheshire East Council shortly.

In November 2021 the engaged consultant, who had initially only been appointed to undertake a review of the Legh Road Conservation Area, advised the council that they did not wish to continue the commission. The consultant cited the reasons as the project taking significantly longer than anticipated and requiring more hours than the original quotes had been based on due to the lack of engagement from CEC early in the process and latterly (and the primary frustration cited at the termination of the commission) issues with Town Council processes.

To this end, the Town Clerk has sought quotations from alternative consultants to continue the reviews.

### 2.0 ALTERNATIVE QUOTATIONS

The Town Clerk approached a number of companies specialising in the field; this included one company which submitted a quotation in the original procurement process. The quote submissions have been provided to committee members.

The quotations are as follows:

	Company A	Company B	Company C
St John's Avenue	7,500.00	9,093.75	4,950.00
Heathfield Square	5,000.00	9,093.75	4,850.00
Crosstown	5,000.00	9,093.75	4,750.00
Town Centre	15,000.00	12,909.38	19,500.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>32,500.00</b>	<b>40,190.63</b>	<b>34,050.00</b>

Company A would discount the total commission to £24,375 if appointed to do all reviews. Likewise, company B would discount the total commission to £36,171. Company C did not provide this option although they did in the original procurement.

The budget allocated by Council to undertake the reviews was £12,375, of which £4,192 has been spent leaving £8,183 available. It is notable that the quoted costs are significantly higher than the budget originally allocated.

To undertake the two priority reviews (St John's and Town Centre) would require at least £17,859, requiring an additional budget allocation of £9,676.

The committee does not have delegated authority to incur expenditure and therefore must make a recommendation to Council as to the preferred way forward.

Options for the recommendations to Council include:

- a) To undertake the review of the St John's Avenue Conservation Area using the current year budget and consider making budget provision for further reviews in setting the 2023/24 budget
- b) To undertake the reviews of both the St John's Avenue and Town Centre Conservation Areas using the current year budget with a planned draw down from the general reserve to enable the reviews to be undertaken in 2022 and look to make budget provision for further reviews in the 2023/24 budget.

The committee should indicate its preferred supplier(s) to Council. It could recommend the use different consultants for different reviews if it was more economical e.g. Company C for all reviews except the Town Centre and Company B for the Town Centre.

### 3.0 DECISIONS REQUIRED

The committee should agree a recommendation to Full Council on progressing the reviews.