

REPORT TO PLANNING COMMITTEE

CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISALS AND MANAGEMENT PLANS



Report Reference PL-23-06
Meeting Date 6th November 2023
Agenda Item 9
Prepared by Planning and Facilities Officer

1.0 BACKGROUND

In 2022 a consultant was appointed to undertake the remaining four conservation area reviews. An engagement meeting including the consultant and the Conservation Officer created a timeline of engagement for the consultant to work to.

The remaining conservation areas were ordered, with the St Johns and Heathfield Square appraisal and management plan drafts being completed early in 2023, and the Crosstown appraisal and management plan draft completed in summer 2023. The draft documents have been revised following a review period for members of the committee and the conservation area working group to make comments. Once agreed, the draft documents will be submitted to Cheshire East Council for progression to public consultation.

The Town Centre Conservation Area appraisal and management plan draft is currently subject to the same member review period as noted above.

The revised draft documents can be accessed via the below links:

[Heathfield Square Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan draft document](#)

[St Johns Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan draft document](#)

[Cross Town Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan draft document](#)

2.0 MEMBER FEEDBACK

During each review period, members of the committee were invited to comment on the respective documents. The primary concerns from one member were related to Article 4 directions. The member noted the reports were written well and highlighted each of the conservation areas attributes whilst recommending policies to enhance and retain their qualities but could not support the placing or extension of Article 4 directives within each. The member also highlighted specific concerns relating to alluded enforcement within the wording of the management plan for the Cross Town document and did not want to mislead residents.

The raised points were discussed with the conservation area working group and the consultant was asked to adjust the wording of the management plan highlighting its function as guidance which includes a set of aspirational recommendations.

3.0 ARTICLE 4 DIRECTIVES

An article 4 direction is a direction under article 4 of the General Permitted Development Order which enables the local planning authority to withdraw specified permitted development rights across a defined area. The NPPF advises all article 4 directions should be applied in a measured and targeted way. They should be based on robust evidence and apply to the smallest geographical area possible. An article 4 direction only means that a particular development cannot be carried out under permitted development and would therefore need a planning application, giving the local planning authority the opportunity to consider a proposal in more detail.

The Knutsford Neighbourhood Plan contains an aspiration, stating, The Town Council will 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.

4.0 CONSERVATION AREA WORKING GROUP

The working group met and noted they would like there to be some consistency throughout the “wider knutsford” section of all the documents produced by the consultant. Comments from members along with several attachments, notes, and an extract from the Legh Road document for use as an informative, were discussed and forwarded to the consultant to make amendments and adjustments to the visual and textual contents of each document.

The working group agreed to encourage Cheshire East Council to adopt the proposed extension option B within the Cross Town document and to see if an article 4 direction to retain the front boundary walls could be explored.

After a subsequent review of the revised draft documents the working group have highlighted a number of minor issues which include typographical errors, sentence rephrasing and correction, removal of redundant wording, and one or two photograph changes, that are needed to firm-up the documents before submission.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is recommended the committee approve the submission to Cheshire East Council, the Heathfield Square Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan draft document, subject to minor typographic and contextual amendments identified by the conservation area working group.
2. It is recommended the committee approve the submission to Cheshire East Council, the St Johns Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan draft document, subject to minor typographic and contextual amendments identified by the conservation area working group, and supports the proposed areas for inclusion to be instead included in the Town Centre Conservation Area.
3. It is recommended the committee approve the submission to Cheshire East Council, the Cross Town Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan draft document, subject to minor typographic and contextual amendments identified by the conservation area working group, and supports the proposed extension option B with an aspiration to implement an article 4 directive to protect front boundary treatments.