

# Agenda Item 8

**To:** East Area Planning Committee  
**Date:** 14<sup>th</sup> August 2012 **Item No:**  
**Report of:** Head of City Development  
**Title of Report:** Conservation Area Appraisal Report on Final Draft

## Summary and Recommendations

### **Purpose of Report:**

To inform the committee of the completion of public consultation on the Headington Hill Conservation Area Appraisal and to request endorsement of the amended appraisal.

**Key decision:** No

### **Report Approved by**

**Legal:** Michael Morgan

**Policy Framework:** NPPF: National Planning Policy Framework  
Adopted Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016  
Oxford Core Strategy 2006-2026

1. **Recommendation(s):** The Committee is recommended to endorse the study, support the principles it promotes and use it as a material consideration to inform the decisions that it makes about changes in the Headington Hill Conservation Area.

## **Summary**

- 1.0 Following public consultation between 26<sup>th</sup> June and 24<sup>th</sup> July the draft conservation area appraisal has been amended to take account of representations received. The Committee is asked to endorse the appraisal. Copies of the final draft of the appraisal have been circulated to committee members.

## **Preparation of the appraisal**

- 2.0 Assessment of the Conservation Area was undertaken with the assistance of Pullens Lane Association, Harberton Mead Residents' Association, Jack Straws Lane Association, Headington Hill Residents' Association, Feilden Grove Residents' Association, New Marston (South) Residents' Association, the Marston Wildlife Group and Oxfordshire County Council Highways Department. In September and October 2011 local residents used the Oxford Character Assessment Toolkit to assess the contribution of their streets to the significance of the conservation area. These were used by the Conservation Officer

to prepare Street Character Statements, which form a part of the appraisal. This provides an additional level of data gathering beyond the capacity available with the Council's resources and is best practice recognised in English Heritage's guidance. The authors were also supported by a number of independent members of the public and the ward councillors.

- 3.0 Relevant extracts of the consultation draft were circulated to the City Council's Planning Policy, Development Control, Parks and Leisure Departments.

### **Public Consultation on the Draft Appraisal**

- 4.0 The public consultation was advertised via the City Council's website, and on community websites. Stakeholder Groups, including the residents' associations and businesses including Oxford Brookes University, Rye St Antony School, Scholarship & Christianity in Oxford, EF Education First and Headington School were notified of the consultation by email. The Oxford Mail published an article about the consultation on the appraisal, which gave it additional prominence. The draft appraisal, including the associated maps, was available to view via the internet. Comment on the draft appraisal was invited as written representations or via an open question using the Council's online consultation software. This process complies with best practice in the preparation of a conservation area appraisal as set out in English Heritage's guidance document.

### **Consultation responses received.**

- 5.0 37 responses were received to the consultation on the draft appraisal , including representations from or on behalf of two institutions, five community organisations, 27 residents who live within the area and one local councillor. A break down of the responses received is presented in the Report of public consultation attached. In summary, the majority expressed general support for the appraisal (74%), whilst representatives of the area's community associations all expressed satisfaction that the appraisal provided an accurate representation of the area's character with the addition of some minor amendments.
- 6.0 4 responses were received that were critical of the appraisal in general and considered that it had significant faults, or suggested that the process of preparation did not conform with best practice. The reason given was that institutions were not involved in early data gathering for the preparation of the appraisal. The early data gathering undertaken followed best practice identified by English Heritage in the use of well informed local residents to increase the capacity of Council's to prepare conservation area appraisals. It did not replace the need for consultation, which has been undertaken in conformance with English Heritage's best practice guidance.
- 7.0 As a related point four respondents stated that they felt the appraisal did not reflect the importance of institutions and educational uses to the

character of the conservation area. Two went further to suggest that this was a result of the reliance on residents to provide information in early data gathering. There is a fundamental misunderstanding evident in these responses between the contribution of 'land use' and the area's special historic or architectural interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. We have added to the appraisal to make this distinction clearer, including a review of the uses within the conservation area. We have also supplemented our analysis of past impacts on the character and appearance of the area resulting from the subdivision of property and later 20<sup>th</sup> century sub-urban housing development in the north of the conservation area.

8. The assessment of traffic impacts on the area also received criticism. We have revised the appraisal to reflect the known deleterious impact of morning and afternoon traffic on Pullens Lane in particular. However, this assessment is not based on a full traffic survey. Where the assessment is based on the testimony of local residents we have stated this in the appraisal and in such cases this should indicate the need to undertake fuller traffic surveys when considering the future management of the area including proposals for change. Nevertheless there is evidence that this has been a concern for the management of the area since, at least, the early 1970s.
9. Local residents also raised the condition of the road, footpath and grassed verge at Pullens Lane south as a significant issue that should be given prominence in the appraisal. We have amended the text to highlight this issue and will add photographs to illustrate this as part of desktop publishing.
10. Although the consultation did not request comment on specific issues affecting the conservation area the impact of traffic on the area's character and appearance and the vulnerability of its tranquil character as an element of its significance to intensification of institutional uses were both noted by a high number of respondents. These points both reflect the concerns that are evidenced in the City Council's planning policy statement for the area published in 1973 and the subsequent designation of the conservation area in 1977. We have update the text to highlight the longterm concern over these issues.
- 11.0 A table setting out the more specific comments received, with responses to individual comments, is appended to this report and has been circulated to committee members with the appraisal. It will be made available to view on the City Council's web-site along with the final draft of the appraisal.
- 12.0 Where appropriate the text has been revised to take these views into account. A number of minor comments on text and mapping, including the accuracy of factual statements relating to individual buildings were received and have been addressed in the revised draft appraisal.

13.0 Following the completion of the amendments in response to comments received, the appraisal now represents a widely supported assessment of the conservation area's special historic or architectural interest, which identifies the character and appearance that is desirable to preserve or enhance.

### **Financial and legal implications**

13.0 The appraisal provides evidence for the management of the existing conservation area and does not require any additional works or have any additional financial or legal implications.

### **Recommendation:**

14.0 The Committee is recommended to endorse the study, support the principles it promotes and use it as a material consideration to inform the decisions that it makes about changes in the Headington Hill Conservation Area.

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### **Background papers:**

English Heritage, *Understanding Place: Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals and Management*, 2011

English Heritage, *Conservation Principles*, 2008

NPPF: National Planning Policy Framework 2012

**Version number: 1 August 2012**