

To: City Executive Board
Date: 19 May 2016
Report of: Patsy Dell, Head of Planning & Regulatory Service
Title of Report: Old Marston Conservation Area appraisal

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present the conservation area appraisal for Old Marston to Board.
Key decision:	No
Executive Board Member:	Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Executive Board Member for Planning, Transport and Regulatory Services
Corporate Priority:	A vibrant and sustainable economy. Meeting housing needs. Strong and active communities.
Policy Framework:	Oxford Local Plan (including the Oxford Local Plan 2001-16, the Core Strategy and the Sites & Housing Plan)
Recommendation(s):That the City Executive Board resolves to:	
1. Approve the Old Marston Conservation Area appraisal (appended to this report) and endorse it for use in informing development management decisions 2. Endorse the conservation principles it promotes and its key conclusions	

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Old Marston conservation Area appraisal
Appendix 2	Summary of public comments (2012-13)
Appendix 3	Risk Register

Introduction and background

- Under guidance from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and English Heritage (now Heritage England), all designated conservation areas must

- undergo a formal character appraisal to justify their original designation, to define their significance and values, and to inform decisions regarding future change.
2. A draft conservation area appraisal for Old Marston Conservation Area was prepared in 2012, underwent public consultation, and revised following comments received.
 3. The draft appraisal has now been brought up to date to take account of any significant changes to the character of the area since 2012 and to ensure that it is factually correct at the time of its publication. These are only minor changes, and the local community has been informed of the process.

Character Appraisal

4. The Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve, should be designated as conservation areas.
5. Old Marston lies about 2 miles northeast of the centre of Oxford. It was first recorded in 1122, but its name suggests it already existed as a small village or hamlet by the Anglo-Saxon period on the marshy ground bordering the water meadows of the River Cherwell.
6. The prevailing architectural character of the village is principally derived from the large number of small houses and cottages built in the local vernacular style. Ranging in date from the medieval period to the 19th century, they are constructed in a variety of materials, including stone and local brick, with thatched and tiled roofs. The setting of Marston is dominated by belts of trees and the visible remains of the open fields of the medieval system of land tenure.
7. The village remained relatively isolated in the late 19th and early 20th centuries despite the expansion of Oxford and the New Marston suburb to the south. Later 20th century infill development has managed to retain the rural character of the village and maintain the focus of views and vistas on older properties.
8. In seeking to conserve and enhance the special architectural and historic character of Marston, the South Oxfordshire District Council designated it a conservation area in July 1976, and rationalised the boundary on 12th December 1989. Old Marston was absorbed within the city boundaries of Oxford in 1991.
9. The appraisal for Old Marston is attached to this report as Appendix 1. It seeks to define the elements that contribute to the special character of Old Marston Conservation Area, highlight the areas of significance and associated vulnerabilities together with brief potential enhancement opportunities.

Public Consultation

10. A Draft Character Appraisal for Old Marston that defines the special interest and character of the conservation area was prepared as a partnership between the City Council, Oxford Preservation Trust (Old Marston Branch) and the Old Marston Parish Council between Summer 2011 and Spring 2012.
11. Stakeholders were involved early on, with the use of the Oxford Character Assessment Toolkit, and were also provided with an early draft of the appraisal for comment prior to the wider consultation. The draft appraisal was then made available for formal Public Consultation from Friday 16 March 2012 until Friday 27 April 2012.

12. A summary of the public comments received and the City Council's officer response is attached as Appendix 2.

13. In response to the comments received in 2012 and some amendments necessary to update the appraisal a few minor changes were made to the document. The original stakeholders were re-consulted but no additional comments were received.

2015 update to the appraisal

14. In order to bring the appraisal up to date, in November 2015 the Oxford Preservation Trust was engaged to check any significant developments or changes to the character that might have taken place over the intervening years since the production of the draft. This included:

- Checking the planning history for the conservation area in the five years since 01/01/2011, and assessing whether or not new developments that have been given permission over the intervening 5 years have been built and what their impact (if any) on the character has been.
- Checking those buildings described in the appraisal draft as neglected, and whether or not that description is still warranted.
- Checking any properties mentioned in the appraisal as having planning permission that may since have been implemented, and whether this has had any effect on the character of the area.

15. As part of this exercise, the Trust informed key local stakeholders of this update on an informal basis and ascertained their views on any changes to character since the appraisal was drafted.

16. As this exercise involved checking and correcting minor changes to statements of fact, the original stakeholders were not re-consulted.

Other implications

17. The following additional implications have been considered:

- Consultation and communications – Full consultation undertaken.
- Health and safety – Not affected.
- Human resources – Not affected
- Crime and disorder - Not affected
- Sustainability/Environmental – The report focuses on environmental issues seeking to preserve the environment of the community of Old Marston, including their buildings and open spaces.

Financial implications

18. The evidence contained within the conservation area appraisal will be used by existing planning and conservation officers in the course of their day to day work.

19. The design and printing costs of a final version of the Conservation Area appraisal will be available on the Council's website. A limited number of hard copies will be produced. These costs can be met from existing budgets for conservation.

Legal issues

20. The appraisal will become part of the evidence base for planning policies and will represent a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

Level of risk

21. Should the appraisal not be endorsed as recommended, a reputational risk to the Council could arise. Mitigation of this risk has been controlled by involving the local community in the preparation of the appraisal and carefully producing the Appraisal document, amending inaccuracies where noted.

Equalities impact

22. The consultation exercise brought the information to a wide audience, and allowed a greater understanding generally of conservation area aspirations and procedures.

Conclusion

23. The historic environment is a precious and vulnerable resource that requires effective management to protect it for both present and future generations to enjoy.

24. A Local Planning Authority's justification for designation, as reflected in the assessment of the area's special interest, its character and appearance, is a factor which the Secretary of State will take into account when considering planning appeals.

25. A Conservation Area appraisal for Old Marston Area has been prepared with the full involvement of the local community, and brought up to date. It should provide assistance to all participants in the development process by identifying aspects of heritage significance and providing an authoritative point of reference.

Report author	Ian Marshall
Job title	Team Manager, Design, Heritage and Specialist Services Team
Service area or department	Planning and Regulatory Services
Telephone	01865 522332
e-mail	imarshall@oxford.gov.uk

References:

- 1 English Heritage, *Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals*, 2005
Land Use Consultants, *A Character Assessment of Oxford in its Landscape Setting*, March 2002
- 2 English Heritage, *Guidance on Conservation Area Management Plans*, 2005
- 3 English Heritage, *Conservation Principles*, 2008
- 4 DCLG, *National Planning Policy Framework*, 2012