

REPORT TO CABINET

Title: **CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISALS FOR ETON AND WINDSOR TOWN CENTRE, INCLUDING MANAGEMENT PLAN PROPOSALS**

Date: 26 November 2009

Member Reporting: Councillor Mrs Knight

Contact Officer(s): Elizabeth Long, Conservation Officer Tel 01628 796057

Wards affected: Castle Without, Eton and Castle.

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1.1 The conservation and management of the built heritage is important to the Council and as such this report seeks approval to adopt Conservation Area Appraisal documents and related Management Plans for both the Eton and Windsor Town Centre Conservation Areas.
- 1.1.2 An appraisal document seeks to identify the *Special Architectural and Historic Interest* and the changing needs of each Conservation Area. The related Management Plan seeks to guide the controlled and positive management of change within each Conservation Area, thus avoiding harmful development.
- 1.1.3 Appraisal documents can be a vital tool to enable the active management of a Conservation Area and as such can have an impact on the economy, footfall and vitality of an area. For this reason, the appraisal documents are fundamental not just in terms of planning but for the activities of the Council as a whole.
- 1.1.4 As a result of these documents there is now a written definition, analysis and appraisal of what makes the individual Conservation Areas of Windsor Town Centre and Eton special and actions for protection and improvement of these areas are now clearly identified.
- 1.1.5 There are no proposed changes to Conservation Area boundaries in either Windsor Town Centre or Eton as a result of these documents.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Eton and Windsor Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal documents, together with the respective Management Plans, be approved to guide future planning decisions and to inform the Local Development Framework.

What will be different for residents as a result of this decision?

Residents will be clear about the important features and characteristics existing within the Conservation Areas, and the objectives of the Council in preserving and enhancing the built heritage for that area. The identification of these features will assist in the formulation and determination of planning applications in the areas.

3. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Background

- 3.1.1 There have been two separate documents, one for each Conservation Area, prepared in accordance with the overall programme for the production and review of appraisals for all the conservation areas in the Borough, which was agreed at Cabinet in May 2008.
- 3.1.2 Windsor Town Centre Conservation Area was originally designated in December 1969. The boundaries were revised and amended in 1978, 1990 and 1991. Despite being one of the first Conservation Areas to be designated in the Borough, no formal Appraisal has been undertaken previously.
- 3.1.3 Eton was first designated by Buckinghamshire County Council in 1971. Changes in Local Government resulted in Eton Conservation Area becoming part of Berkshire in 1974. In June 1996, a Conservation Area Statement was approved by the Borough Council and the current document is an update of this.
- 3.1.4 A draft Appraisal document was produced for each Conservation Area and these documents were the subject of a public consultation exercise during July and August 2009. Proposed publication versions of the Appraisal Documents, amended to reflect the results of the consultation exercise, and a report summarising the consultation exercise are available in Group Rooms, Members' Room and with Democratic Services.
- 3.1.5 Comments received as a result of the consultation exercise were largely supportive of the documents and very few amendments were required as a result. Following positive feedback from the Windsor and Eton Society there have been amendments to the management plan to reflect local opinion in support of future town centre enhancements. The document also places a stronger emphasis on issues of riverside management and maintaining river views as a result of comments received from the Environment Agency.
- 3.1.6 A Management Plan is included as a section within the overall Appraisal Documents. This is intended to contain mid to long term strategies for preserving or enhancing the area, based on the issues and recommendations for action arising from the appraisal and relates to many areas of the council's activities within each Conservation Area.

4. OPTIONS AVAILABLE AND RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 Options

	Option	Comments	Financial Implications
1.	To endorse the appraisal documents and management plans	Recommended. This would enable the Appraisals to be used to support planning decisions at all levels.	Revenue - N/A Capital - Some of the measures will require funding if implemented. Funding could be from S106 or subject to a capital bid.
2.	Do nothing	Not Recommended. The Council would not be moving towards the recommended position of having up to date Appraisals, and there would be elements of the LDF work that would lack appropriate support.	Revenue - N/A Capital - N/A

4.2 Risk assessment

- 4.2.1 Appraisal documents are important tools in understanding the significance of historic areas and can be used as a reference to influence all Council activities in these areas. Without these documents an important reference is not available.
- 4.2.2 In relation to planning decisions, the lack of appraisal documents may lead to a reduction in the weight that might be given to the importance of the characteristics of the Conservation Areas in planning decisions, particularly in appeals.
- 4.2.3 The incorporation of a consultation exercise in the process reduces the risk that the Appraisal does not reflect local views.

5. CONSULTATIONS CARRIED OUT

- 5.1.1 All residents and business properties together with the utility companies operating within the Conservation Areas were notified of the consultation process and the availability of the draft documents. There was also an internal consultation process within the authority with relevant council officers.
- 5.1.2 Public exhibition/drop in sessions were held on Thursday 9th July 2009 in the Guildhall and on Tuesday 14th July in Eton Town Council offices, both between 4pm and 8pm to which residents of both Conservation Areas were invited. Copies of the Appraisal documents were available for public viewing

and members of the Conservation team were present to answer any queries and record any comments made.

5.1.3 The draft documents were made available on the Council's website from Monday 29th June and copies were deposited at Eton, Windsor and Maidenhead Public Libraries and York House, Eton Town Council Offices, and Maidenhead Town Hall. Full copies of the Appraisal Document were sent to relevant Cabinet Members, Ward Councillors, Eton Town Council, local amenity bodies and English Heritage.

5.1.4 The results of the consultation exercise are summarised in a separate report (see 3.1.4).

6. COMMENTS FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

6.1.1 The Panel endorsed the report on 10/11/09.

6.1.2 Some minor rewording required regarding the consultation process. Duly noted and will be amended for the final draft.

7. IMPLICATIONS

7.1.1 The following implications have been addressed where indicated below.

Financial	Legal	Human Rights Act	Planning	Sustainable Development	Diversity & Equality
✓	✓	N/A	✓	✓	N/A

Background Papers:

PPG15 - Planning and the Historic Environment (September 1994)
 English Heritage – Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals 2006
 English Heritage – Guidance on Management of Conservation Area Appraisals 2006
 RBWM Local Plan, July 1999 (incorporating alterations adopted 2003)
 RBWM Eton Conservation Area Appraisal, Consultation Draft (June 2009)
 RBWM Eton Conservation Area Appraisal, Publication Draft for Cabinet (Nov 2009)
 RBWM Windsor Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal, Consultation Draft (June 2009)
 RBWM Windsor Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal, Publication Draft for Cabinet (Nov 2009)
 RBWM Eton and Windsor Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisals; Summary of Consultation Exercise, Responses and Proposed Amendments (Aug 2009).