

Executive Report

Report of: Head of Planning

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To: EXECUTIVE

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Report No. 87/10

Conservation Area Appraisals for Cumnor and Bourton

Recommendations

That Executive:

- (a) Adopts the new conservation area boundary for Bourton as shown on map 5 of the conservation area appraisal for Bourton.
- (b) Adopts the new conservation area boundary for Cumnor as shown on map 4 of the conservation area appraisal for Cumnor.
- (c) Adopts the Bourton conservation area appraisal attached to this report as appendix 2.
- (d) Adopts the Cumnor conservation area appraisal attached to this report as appendix 2.

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to outline the work that has been carried out to review the conservation areas of Bourton and Cumnor. It outlines the methodology of the two appraisals, the consultation process undertaken, responds to the comments received and recommends the adoption of the appraisal documents and changes to the boundaries of both conservation areas.
2. The comments received in response to the consultation are summarised in appendix 1 to the report along with the officer's comments and recommendations.

Proposed changes to the appraisals are set out in appendix 2 including changes to the conservation area boundaries which are illustrated on map 4 for Cumnor and map 5 for Bourton. Deletions to the text of the appraisals are struck through and new text is underlined. In addition to the recommended changes made in response to the public consultation other changes have been made to the text including factual information and editorial changes.

Strategic objectives

3. This report accords with the strategic objective of protecting our environment.

Background

4. Section 69 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the council to not only designate new conservation areas but also to review existing ones. The purpose of designating conservation areas is not to halt change but when considering proposals for development to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the special character or appearance. In the Vale there are currently 52 conservation areas. The majority were designated between 1969 and 1971. A number of reviews have been carried out since then. In 1990 a review of all the rural conservation areas was carried out which resulted in amendments to the boundaries of the conservation areas at Appleton, Blewbury, Cumnor, East Hanney, Kingston Bagpuize, Pusey and West Hanney, and the designation of three new ones at Goosey, Kingston Lisle and Littleworth. Most of the Vale's conservation areas designated before 1974 do not have a formal assessment setting out the reasons for their designation, as recommended by current government guidance.
5. The Cumnor conservation area was originally designated on 9 July 1969 following which amendments were made to the boundary on 24 July 1990. Bourton conservation area was designated on 3 Feb.1971.
6. Appraisals highlight the elements and features that are worthy of retention or enhancement and those that detract from the special character of the conservation area. The information in appraisals is helpful to local residents in understanding the development of their area and will provide a useful resource for other historical and tourism projects. The appraisals will also help developers understand the area when drawing up development proposals prior to submitting planning applications. Appraisals are a material consideration for development management decisions made by the council and by the Secretary of State when considering appeals.
7. In late 2006 the council appointed a temporary part time conservation area appraisals project officer, to commence a review of conservation areas by undertaking conservation area appraisals. The appraisals were to identify the special character of the areas that justified their designation. The work was commenced in order to meet Best Value Performance Indicators (BPVI) introduced in 2006/07. During the project officer's time at the council three appraisals were completed covering Northcourt in Abingdon, Wytham and East Hendred and consultation was carried out on two draft appraisals for Bourton and Cumnor.
8. At a meeting of the Executive held on 6 June 2008 when the appraisals for Northcourt, Wytham and East Hendred were recommended for adoption it was agreed that work could commence on appraisals for Cumnor and Bourton. Cumnor was selected because as a loose knit village it suffers from pressure for

development proposals and Bourton as an example of a former estate village at the western end of the Vale.

9. The methodology used for the appraisals was that agreed with the Historic Areas Advisor from English Heritage based on the advice in "Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals" (English Heritage August 2005). The same methodology has been used in all the appraisals.
10. The appraisal process included historical, archaeological and architectural desktop research using the County Council's local studies heritage search facility, archive and map research at the Westgate local studies centre and by contacting local historical groups and individuals with relevant expertise. Field work included a walking survey, mapping, and photographing features of interest. The information was used to assess the historic development of the villages and identify important trees, open spaces, individual buildings, walls and features.
11. The draft appraisals drew together all this work from which special character areas were defined and recommendations to change the conservation area boundaries were made.
12. The draft appraisals were first distributed to local members and the Parish Councils for comment. More formal consultation followed including the distribution of leaflets to all properties in and close to the conservation areas inviting residents to a public meeting and stating where the draft appraisals could be viewed. Bourton and Cumnor Parish Councils assisted by distributing the leaflets. Copies of the documents were made available for inspection at the local shop in the case of Cumnor, the parish council offices and on the Vale's web site. At the public meetings the project officer gave a slide presentation of the appraisal work and other officers of the Vale Council were available to answer questions. Consultation on the Bourton conservation area appraisal was carried out during Nov and Dec 2008 and the public meeting was held on 26 Nov. Consultation on the Cumnor appraisal was carried out during the same period and the public meeting was held on 17 Nov. 2008.
13. Oxfordshire County Council as the highway authority and public utilities such as BT and Southern Electric were consulted on the appraisals as well as the Vale's development management teams and English Heritage.
14. The responses to the consultation were varied but the majority of comments consisted of points of detail such as descriptions of individual features, and the correction of street names and addresses. More substantive comments related to the boundaries of the conservation areas.
15. In the case of Bourton the most significant change to emerge from the appraisal was the need to make the conservation area a lot larger to include Lower Bourton and the grounds to Pinewood School. These extensions were well supported by respondents except for Pinewood School who commented that it was illogical and unnecessary to include the playing fields. Some suggestions were made to extend the conservation area even further by including Bourton End, but this area is well outside the core of the village and lacks sufficient quality and interest to be included.
16. The Cumnor conservation area appraisal also resulted in significant extensions being proposed to the boundary of the conservation area to include the historic

site of Cumnor Place to the south of the church and the more open part of the village up to and including the Leys to the west of the village. Various suggestions were made to include or exclude areas on the edge of the conservation area. These have been responded to in detail in appendix 1.

Options

17. The options are to adopt the conservation area appraisals and the new conservation area boundaries for Cumnor and Bourton or to reject them.

Financial Implications

18. There are no financial implications as a result of this report other than the cost of placing the adoption notices in the newspapers.

Legal Implications

19. The legislation requires that the changes to the conservation areas boundaries will need to be advertised in the London Gazette, a local newspaper and registered in the local land charges register.

Risks

20. There are no risks associated with this report.

Other implications

21. None

Conclusion

21. To have up to date conservation area appraisals for Cumnor and Bourton will help householders and developers in drawing up their development proposals prior to submitting planning applications. The appraisals will also provide a material consideration for development management decisions and by the Secretary of State when considering appeals.

Background Papers

- Draft conservation area appraisals for Cumnor and Bourton, comments received in response to consultation.