

EAST GRINSTEAD CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND BOUNDARY REVIEW – OUTCOME OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION

REPORT OF: DIVISIONAL LEADER FOR PLANNING AND ECONOMY
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Wards Affected: East Grinstead
Key Decision: No
Report to: Scrutiny Committee for Housing, Planning and Economic Growth
Date of meeting: 23rd October 2019

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to request the Committee to consider the proposed changes resulting from the public consultation on the East Grinstead Conservation Area Appraisal and Boundary Review.
2. Subject to the above consideration, the Committee is asked to recommend that Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning approves the proposed changes to the East Grinstead Appraisal document; agrees the revised boundary of the Conservation Area; and approves the revised document as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

Summary

3. This report:
 - a) sets out the background to the Council's legal obligations to prepare Conservation Area appraisals, and relevant Historic England guidance;
 - b) describes the process of preparation of the East Grinstead Conservation Area Appraisal and the associated boundary review, including the public consultation; and
 - c) sets out the outcome of the consultation and proposed changes to the East Grinstead Conservation Area Appraisal and boundary.

Recommendations

4. **That the Scrutiny Committee agrees to:**
 - (i) **Consider the responses to the public consultation on the East Grinstead Conservation Area Appraisal and the recommended changes, as set out in Appendix 1 to this report;**
 - (ii) **Delegate approval of the proposed changes to the East Grinstead Conservation Area Appraisal to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning along with approval of the revised document (as set out in Appendix 2), as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications; and**
 - (iii) **Delegate approval of the proposed boundary changes, as illustrated in Appendix 3, to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning.**
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Background

5. A Conservation Area is defined as an area of 'special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.'
Conservation areas were originally introduced through the Civic Amenities Act in 1967. They are designated by local authorities under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (The Act). Designation of a conservation area is in recognition that an area has a special character and identity that is worth preserving or enhancing.
6. Under The Act, Local Planning Authorities have a duty from time to time to review the Conservation Areas within their districts. The review should consider whether the boundaries of existing Conservation Areas should be changed, and new areas identified. The Act also places a duty on Local Planning Authorities to draw up and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of their Conservation Areas in the form of Management Proposals.
7. It is good practice, as advocated by Historic England in their publication '*Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management*', for a local planning authority to prepare Conservation Area Appraisals to inform this process of periodic boundary review and the development of management proposals. Historic England advises that these appraisals should clearly identify the qualities which make a Conservation Area special, and how these qualities can be preserved and enhanced.

The East Grinstead Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Proposals

8. The programme for a district wide review of Appraisals was approved by Scrutiny Committee for Community, Housing and Planning last year. East Grinstead is identified as a priority in this programme. In addition, the Economic Development Strategy highlights as a Strategic Priority, the need to prepare an appraisal for East Grinstead because of the economic role of the town and its high historic value.
9. Part A of the East Grinstead Conservation Area Appraisal clearly defines the special architectural and historic interest that justifies its designation. East Grinstead is one of the best surviving medieval market towns in Sussex, famous for its timber framed buildings and its ridgeline setting within the High Weald landscape. Remarkably, its medieval town plan is still evident today. The Appraisal provides a clear statement of this special interest and identifies the key features that should be preserved and enhanced. This will enable Development Management Officers, Members, landowners and developers to understand exactly what needs to be protected in development proposals. It will also help raise awareness amongst the Town Council, businesses and the public of the qualities that make East Grinstead a special place.
10. Part B of the document sets out a series of Management Proposals which are measures to address the issues affecting the special interest of the Conservation Area and to preserve and enhance its character. The Management Proposals will provide a focus for where suitable funding could be targeted. In this respect, as the special character of the Conservation Area is shaped by the many high quality independent shops found in the High Street, their retention is critical in ensuring the town's vibrancy, vitality and competitiveness.

11. It is therefore proposed to investigate the potential for the creation of a Business Improvement District (BID) in East Grinstead which is a business led and business funded body that aims to improve the aesthetic and trading environment of the town centre. The proposal for a BID is not currently included in the District Council's Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan. Therefore, the timetable, including when funding would be available for the delivery of this project, is subject to further consideration as part of the review of the Economic Development Strategy.
12. The Management Proposals also address the issues of the cumulative impact of minor alterations, such as changes to shopfronts and windows and door; issues such as the poor condition of some of the service/backyard areas and waste and traffic management.
13. A small number of boundary changes are also proposed. The Appraisal work has identified no reason to significantly alter the existing Conservation Area boundary, apart from some rationalisation at the northern and western edges to include the complete extent of the parade of shops and to also include some rear service yards which were the original burgage plots and are subject to development pressures. It is also proposed to include the Rectory and its grounds due to its association with the Church and its attractive historic boundary walls. In addition, it is proposed to use this opportunity to rectify a previous omission and statutorily confirm the Conservation Area boundary for Land at the rear of 8-14 High Street and the row of cottages 7-17 Ship Street. While these changes to the boundary were made through the Local Plan process in 2003, the relevant statutory notices were not published. The proposed boundary changes are shown on the Plan attached as Appendix 3.
14. Once approved by the Council, the Appraisal and boundary changes will form a material and legal consideration in the determination of planning applications, and will inform planning practice and policies for the area. It will also give the local community clear advice on what should be protected within the Conservation Area.

Public Consultation

15. On 17th April 2019, the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning approved the draft East Grinstead Conservation Area Appraisal for public consultation.
16. Consultation on the draft document was held from 17th June to 29th July 2019 (a period of 6 weeks). An exhibition and public meeting was also hosted at East Grinstead Library. In addition, the consultation was published on the Council's website and social media feeds.
17. A total of 26 individual respondents commented on the Appraisal providing 88 separate responses to different parts of the document. Responses were received from Historic England, East Grinstead Town Council, Town Councillors, The East Grinstead Society and local residents. The responses to the public consultation and the proposed amendments are set out in Appendix 1.
18. In general, comments have welcomed the appraisal and supported the Management Proposals. Historic England supports the methodology used. East Grinstead Town Council welcomes the detailed analysis that has been carried out, which they consider will help local Members and the public understand what needs to be preserved when determining planning applications. The Town Council also supports the Management Proposals in particular, exploring the potential to create a Business Improvement District that covers the Town Centre as well as the proposals to address the issues of Waste and Traffic Management in the High Street.

19. The East Grinstead Society and some residents have sought the inclusion of additional important features so that these can be protected, the acknowledgement of impacts as a result of recent new developments within and in the setting of the Conservation Area, and the identification of how these can be avoided in the future. Many residents have also commented on the impact of traffic in the High Street and the need to give priority to pedestrians to provide a more pleasant visitor and shopping environment. Where possible, comments have been acted upon involving additions or changes to the text and reformatting of certain parts of the document.
20. No landowners or residents have objected to the inclusion of their property within the Conservation Area. A few responses have sought the inclusion of additional areas within the Conservation Area boundary. Having reviewed these responses, no significant changes to the proposed boundary review are considered appropriate.
21. The proposed changes in response to the public consultation are clearly identified in red in a revised Appraisal document attached as Appendix 2 (see separate document).

Conclusion

22. It is recommended that the East Grinstead Conservation Area Appraisal is approved as a material consideration in the determination of planning and listed building consent applications.

Legal implications

23. Changes to the Conservation Area boundary would have an effect on the Permitted Development Rights of the affected properties allowing control under the Planning system of some additional forms of development which could potentially affect the character and appearance of the area. The impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area would also become a material factor in the consideration of any planning application affecting properties now included in the Conservation Area, or its amended setting. Statutory notices are required to be prepared, including advertising in the London Gazette, to publicise the approved boundary changes.

Financial Implications

24. There are no significant financial implications arising from the report apart from costs associated with statutory notices associated with the boundary changes. There are no legal requirements to pay compensatory payments for the loss of Permitted Development Rights with regards to those properties that are now included in the Conservation Area.

Risk Management Implications

25. Without a properly planned programme of Conservation Area Appraisals, the Council will not have the necessary evidence base to ensure that development proposals respond appropriately to their context and preserve the special character and appearance of the District's Conservation Areas.

Other Material Implications

26. There are no other material implications.

Appendix 1: Summary of comments and Proposed Schedule of Changes

Appendix 2: East Grinstead Conservation Area Appraisal with proposed changes
(See separate document)

Appendix 3: Proposed Boundary Changes