

Area West Committee – 14th December 2011

8. Chard – Conservation Area Appraisal and Designation of Extensions to Conservation Area (Executive Decision)

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Purpose of the Report

To approve the recently prepared Conservation Area Appraisal and to formally designate an extension to the conservation area.

Public Interest

This report proposes the adoption of the Conservation Area Assessment for Chard, and alterations to the conservation boundary. Conservation areas are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. The Chard Conservation Area was first designated in 1973. The District Council is required to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas. This can be achieved through conservation area appraisals. In order that designation is effective in conserving the special interest, planning decisions must be based on a thorough understanding of the conservation area's character. Appraisals are therefore essential tools for the planning process and to manage informed intervention. They will provide a sound basis, defensible on appeal, for the relevant development plan policies and development control decisions and will form the framework for effective management of change. The appraisal should provide the District Council and the local community with a clear idea of what features and details contribute to the character of the conservation area and how these may relate to the wider proposals for regeneration.

Recommendations

- (1) Approve the Chard Conservation Area Appraisal;
- (2) formally designate extensions to the Chard conservation area;
- (3) advertise the extension to the designated area in accordance with the requirements of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990;
- (4) commit £200 from the area budget to cover the cost of statutory advertising.

Background

Conservation Areas

Conservation areas are areas of **'special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'**. Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 imposes a duty on local authorities to identify appropriate parts of their areas, to designate them as conservation areas *and to keep them under review*.

Historic areas are now extensively recognised for the contribution they make to our cultural inheritance, economic well-being and quality of life. Public support for the conservation and enhancement of areas of architectural and historic interest is well established. By suggesting continuity and stability, such areas provide points of reference in a rapidly changing world: they represent the familiar and cherished local scene. Over 9,000 have been designated nationally since they were introduced in 1967 and there are now 88 in South Somerset.

Designation is a matter for local (Area Committee) decision and is the principal means by which a local authority can apply conservation policies to a particular area.

Chard Conservation Area was first designated in 1980 and has not been reviewed since that date.

Report

South Somerset District Council, in partnership with SWRDA, has commissioned a '**Chard Regeneration Framework**' with the primary aim of producing a series of historical, planning and transportation studies and translating these into one design-led solution for the development of Chard. One of the elements was the production of an up-to date, comprehensive appraisal of the existing conservation area, assessing the historic core's historic assets and understanding current problems and opportunities, and feed this information into the wider Regeneration Plan.

Members will recall that they first considered this report in the summer, and some members questioned the changes to the conservation area. It was agreed that it was best for concerned members to meet with officers for an informal walk around the conservation area, and to consider the alterations.

This review process has led to this recommendation for alterations and extensions to the designated conservation area shown on the attached maps. As stated above, it is a duty of the local planning authority to review conservation area boundaries from time to time and the proposed modifications are considered to be appropriate. The Appraisal and the proposed extensions have been consulted on with all properties to be included in the extensions consulted.

Chard Town Council has replied with no comments on the initial proposals, any reply to the revised proposals will be reported at this committee.

Four letters were received in response to notification.

One was from a volume house builder concerned that an area of land they owned would have an increased area of undeveloped land which would lie within the conservation area. They felt there was no justification. A reply was sent with further justification and no further comment has been received.

Two letters were received from householders:

One was of the view that the area was of no merit and they rejected any further restriction on what they choose to do to their property; a reply was sent outlining the changes that a conservation area brings to a property, and explaining why the area was considered appropriate for designation. No reply has been received.

The second also stated concern that her property was not of any merit, and as part of a review which also took into account the views of internal consultees, her house and the three adjoining were removed. The lady has been informed of this change.

One letter was from a local business that accepted that part of their site was worthy of inclusion, but questioned whether another part of their site should be. This has been revisited and amendments made which remove the areas concerned.

A Ward Member received verbally concerns about a property being included, the main points being concern over a perceived difficulty in the planning process if a property is within the conservation area and they would like future consent to develop. They also had concern with regards to selling the property in the future with it being in the conservation area. The owner has been responded to, and a copy of the reply sent to the Ward Member. No further comments have been received.

The principal extensions are the better brick terraces to the north end of Combe Street and Crimchard, including the cemetery; Holly Terrace and the Holyrood Lace Mill, and nearby terraces to Boden Street; and land to the south of High Street, West of the Crowshute Link; Park Road, and land around and including the relatively recently listed Church of the Good Shepherd. The principal removal is to the west of Manor Farm and the Church, where there are modern houses. Various other minor additions and removals are proposed largely to reflect better the extent of the burgage plots and to account for modern development.

Members are now asked to formally designate the extension areas and to approve the appraisal, with amended conservation area map, so that it can be put into use as guidance in planning and development matters.

A map showing the existing and proposed alterations to Chard Conservation Area is attached.

The Chard Conservation Area Appraisal (Final draft) has not been printed because it is a large document. A copy can be found on the Council's website or can be obtained directly from the Conservation Officer.

Financial Implications

Cost of statutory advertising requirement - approximately £200.

Implications for Corporate Priorities

Contributes to Corporate Aims 4 'Ensure safe, sustainable and cohesive communities' and 5 'Promote a balanced natural and built environment'.

Carbon Emissions and Adapting to Climate Change Implications

No implications arising from this report.

Equality and Diversity Implications

None.

Background Papers: *Conservation Area Designation File*
Chard Conservation Area Assessment.