

Charlton Mackrell and West Charlton Conservation Area Review (Executive Decision)

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Purpose of the Report

To recommend amending the boundary of the Charlton Mackrell Conservation Area, consisting of a large extension to the north of the existing designation.

Public Interest

Conservation Areas are one of the key tools used in the protection and management of change in historic towns and villages. The majority of the historic towns and villages in South Somerset have a conservation area and these need to be appraised and reviewed from time to time. Charlton Mackrell Conservation Area has been reviewed, and amendments are proposed.

Recommendation

- (1) To formally agree the amendments to the designated area, to take effect from today's committee date.
- (2) To advertise the changes in accordance with the requirements of the Planning (Listed building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Background

Conservation areas are areas of **'special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'**.

Historic areas are now extensively recognised for the contribution they make to our cultural inheritance, economic wellbeing and enhancement to quality of life. Public support for the conservation and enhancement of areas of architectural and historic interest is well established while economic benefits for South Somerset of well-cared-for historic areas is considerable. By suggesting continuity and stability, such areas provide points of reference in a rapidly changing world: they represent the familiar and cherished local scene.

88 Conservation Areas have been designated in South Somerset. The designation is a matter for local planning authority decision and is the principal means by which a local authority can apply its conservation policies to a specific town, village or area.

The Charlton Mackrell Conservation Area was first designated in 1990. The District Council is required by the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Area) Act 1990 to designate and review conservation areas within the district. This review and the preparation of a conservation area appraisal contribute to the fulfilment of this requirement.

A Conservation Area Appraisal has not been prepared at this stage, but will be prepared in due course, and brought to the Area East Committee for review and endorsement.

The existing conservation area is centred on West Charlton, taking in important high graded assets such as St Mary's Church, The Court and Manor Farm; all listed at Grade II*. The railway line marks the northern boundary of the current area. It is unclear why the designated area did not make it further north. The area north of the Ilchester Road railway bridge along Ilchester Road and including the Charlton House environs has clear historic character and value. The stretch of Ilchester Road from the bridge to Charlton House has seen little modern intervention. There are a number of older properties that line the road in a traditional manner, defining the view of the end of Charlton House, which in the winter when the trees aren't in leaf creates a very well defined historic vista. This view is of particular interest as the road previously ran straight up to the front of Charlton House and was altered in the late C18th. Buildings have a consistent character in this area. They are all built in the locally distinctive Blue Lias stone, set under a mix of clay tile and slate roofs, with a thatched roof at Shepherds Orchard. Buildings generally sit right at the edge of the road, although the arrangement is somewhat sporadic with some set back and some dwellings set end on with gables facing the road. The spaces between buildings here are important such as the green gap behind Bridge Cottage, as is the consistent use of lias stone for low boundary walls.

The area around Charlton House (listed Grade II*) has its own well defined character. It stands in a spacious formal parkland, bound by a significant range of mature Horse Chestnuts and Yew hedging. There are occasional views into this area from the road, taking in the beautiful southwest facing front elevation of the house. To the north of this area the proposed extension takes in two more historic buildings, including Grade II listed 'The Woods'. Both of these buildings contribute to the setting of Charlton House, and relate to its northern entrance.

We also propose including part of Hillway, which is primarily centred on the village Reading Room, dated 1858, and small Village Green but also includes a pleasant group of historic properties including Highway House and Three Wells Cottage.

Consultation Process

The Parish Council are in support of a review of the conservation area, and have indicated their general support for the proposals. The Parish Council will be formally considering the proposal at their meeting on July 25th. All the affected residents have been written to directly, and public notices have been displayed in the area, referring to information on the Council's website. All responses will be reported verbally to Councillors at committee.

Financial Implications

At designation there is a requirement to advertise locally and nationally to which there is a cost of approximately £250.

Additional publicity for planning applications is required.

Council Plan Implications

Focus 2 – Enhance the Environment

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

No adverse implications. Conserving and reusing buildings is inherently sustainable.

Equality and Diversity Implications

No implications indicated.

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Background Papers: *Conservation Area files.*