

Cabinet – 22 March 2006

Walsall Locks Conservation Area appraisal

Portfolio:	Councillor Adrian Andrew, Regeneration
Service Area:	Environmental Regeneration
Wards:	Birchills and Leamore, Pleck and St Matthews
Forward Plan:	Yes

Summary of report

This report outlines the role that Conservation Area Appraisals play in enabling the Council to fulfil its statutory functions in relation to Conservation Areas.

Good practise requires that decisions concerning conservation areas should be based on an assessment of the special character of the area and the Council is currently undertaking a rolling programme of Conservation Area appraisals. This will also contribute to the requirements of new Best Value Performance Indicators for 2005/2006 which calculates the percentage of conservation areas with up-to-date appraisals. The adoption of conservation area appraisals require a cabinet decision therefore the draft appraisal for the Walsall Locks Conservation Area has been completed and authority is now being sought to go out to consultation and for delegated authority to approve the final draft subject to no adverse comments being received.

Conservation Area designation is the main instrument available to Local Planning Authorities to give effect to conservation policies for a particular neighbourhood or area. Designation provides the Council the opportunity to create policies designed to preserve or enhance all aspects of character or appearance that define an areas special interest.

Copies of the draft Walsall Locks Conservation Area Appraisal Report will be available within the Member's Group Rooms.

Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to approve the draft Church Hill Conservation Area Appraisal for consultation, to note the proposed amendments to the boundary and to delegate authority to the Executive Director of Regeneration to approve the final report subject to no adverse comments being received.

Resource and legal considerations

A current appraisal is generally a requirement of an application for externally funded schemes within conservation areas and such a document can assist in the success of an application. The appraisal can also be used to inform the use of existing resources and target these more effectively.

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 (1) (a) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990). Local Planning Authorities are under a duty, from time to time, to determine which parts of their area should be designated and to keep designated areas under review and, if appropriate, determine whether any further areas should be designated (Section 69 (1) and (2)).

This appraisal fulfils the Council's duty under Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to 'review our areas from time to time.'

Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 stresses the need for local planning authorities to make an assessment of whether the area is of special architectural or historic interest the character and appearance which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. An objective and clear character appraisal will provide a sound basis on which to make fully informed development control decisions and to carry out initiatives to promote the area. The more clearly the special architectural or historic interest that justifies designation is defined and recorded, the sounder will be the basis for local plan policies and development control decisions. Such definition will also assist in the formulation of proposals for the preservation and enhancement of the character or appearance of an area.

The format of this appraisal is based on the English Heritage publication 'Conservation Area Appraisals'.

Citizen impact

The preservation and enhancement of a conservation area creates an asset that is available for all members of the community to learn from and enjoy.

Community safety

No issues.

Environmental impact

Local Planning Authorities are bound in exercising their planning powers, to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area.

The Walsall Locks Conservation Area Appraisal defines aspects of the character and appearance that either contribute to or detract from the nature of the area.

This appraisal will be used to inform development control decisions on planning applications and applications for Conservation Area Consent within the Walsall Locks Conservation Area.

Performance and risk management issues

From 1st April 2005 BV 219b measures the percentage of conservation areas in the local authority area with an up-to-date character appraisal.

Together with BV 219a (number of Conservation Areas) and BV 219c (the percentage of Conservation Areas with published management plans) this indicator will monitor whether planning and other decisions are based on an informed understanding of the special character of the local historic environment and the needs of the community it supports.

The adoption of this appraisal will improve the Council's performance in relation to this BVPI.

Equality implications

Conservation Area policy is applied equally to all property owners/occupiers within the area of designation.

Consultation

Public consultation will be carried out in accordance with the Revised Statement of Community Involvement. Subject to no adverse comments being received delegation is being sought for the approval of the final report by the Executive Director of Regeneration.

Consultation will engage local residents, businesses and other stakeholders through letters and an exhibition. All comments received will be considered and made available to the Executive Director of Regeneration.

Vision 2008

The report has particular relevance to priority 6 of a Vision for Walsall – *Encourage everyone to feel proud of Walsall*.

Background papers

All on the Walsall Locks Conservation Area file.

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Signed:



Executive Director:
T Johnson

Date: 10.03.06

Signed:



Portfolio Holder:
Councillor A Andrew

Date: 10.03.06