

**Caxton Avenue Conservation Area Proposal (Planning Policy and Economic Development Services, Mike Corbett)**

**Synopsis of report:**

The Planning Policy Team was contacted by a local resident asking that several buildings in parts of Caxton Avenue and Coombelands Lane, Addlestone be considered for the Locally Listed Buildings designation, due to their historic links to the Caxton printworks, which used to be located nearby. This proposal was independently assessed by both Surrey County Council and Runnymede Borough Council's Heritage and Conservation Officers, who agreed that the area in which the buildings are located could potentially be designated as a Conservation Area instead.

Following this, the Planning Policy team discussed this recommendation with Members at the meeting of the Council's Infrastructure and Economic Development Working Party on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2021.

The Working Party agreed that officers should carry out further work to produce a draft Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA). This has been developed (see Appendix A) in conjunction with the help of two local residents.

**Recommendation(s): The Planning Committee is recommended to RESOLVE to:**

1. i) **APPROVE** the draft Caxton Avenue Conservation Area Appraisal for public consultation for a period of four weeks, commencing on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2022.

**1. Context and background of report**

- 1.1 In August 2020, a nomination form seeking to have a number of properties along Caxton Avenue and Coombelands Lane designated as Locally Listed Buildings was submitted by a local resident. Following on from a site visit, the Council's Heritage and Conservation Officer (HCO) (in September 2020) reported that the windows of the buildings in question, which are predominantly side opening casements, are in 'cottage style' but have largely been replaced in plastic with false glazing bars hidden in the double-glazing cavity. The HCO took the view that this has the unfortunate effect of showing large panes of glass without the breakup which genuine glazing bars provide. Due to the removal of so much original fabric in the windows, the advice was that the group of buildings was not suitable for Local Listing.
- 1.2 Although the HCO was of the view that the buildings were not suitable for Local Listing, he commented that he was 'quite stunned' at the general layout and quality of the designs, private road system and arcadian tree and shrub cover. He was of the opinion that the grouping had the appearance of a small Garden Village, with all the character of the Garden Village Movement in a loose Arts and Crafts style. The HCO

was of the view that the grouping could merit designation as a Conservation Area and therefore recommended that further specialist advice was sought in this regard.

- 1.3 As such, officers approached Surrey County Council's (SCC) Historic Environment Planning Team for a second opinion, and in July 2021, a joint site visit was undertaken with the SCC Historic Buildings Officer and a member of the Council's Planning Policy Team. The written feedback received from SCC was that the area was worthy of being designated as a Conservation Area.

## **2. Report**

- 2.1 The Council has engaged the expertise of its own in-house and external heritage specialists who have undertaken an assessment of the area. As both specialists have recommended that the area is worthy of Conservation Area status, the Planning Policy Team is seeking to take the next steps required to allow a formal designation to be made.

- 2.2 Under section 69(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 it states that:

Every local planning authority—

(a) shall from time to time determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and

(b) shall designate those areas as conservation areas.

- 2.3 In addition to this legislative requirement, paragraph 191 of the NPPF states that local authorities should ensure when designating a Conservation Area that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest.

- 2.4 As part of the process of designating a Conservation Area, both the Secretary of State and Historic England will need to be notified under s.70(5) of the Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Under s.70(8) of the Act, a notice also needs to be published in the London Gazette and one newspaper circulating in Runnymede. The legislation does not specify a set length of time for the notices to be advertised, or that the owners / occupiers of the properties in the proposed area would need to be consulted. However, officers are recommending that, subject to the approval of the Planning Committee, the Council should undertake consultation with the residents within the area recommended for designation (26 households in total), as well as all individuals and groups registered on the Council's Planning Policy database as this is considered to be best practice and a way to both publicise and gain feedback on the proposal.

- 2.5 SCC advised that to support the potential designation of the area shown in Appendix B as a Conservation Area, a Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA) should be produced. Their advice was that the CAA should:

- Identify why the area is significant;
- Provide both the local and national context to the development along Caxton Avenue and Coombelands Lane, including its history; and
- Possibly include details of the original design of the houses if this can be found through research.

- 2.6 The draft CAA at Appendix A has been designed to cover the above listed points and alongside the narrative in the Assessment, contains photographs of the area, and copies of original historic documents, which help set out why the area has special architectural and historic interest. A covering letter setting out the details of the consultation and potential impacts of having their properties covered by a Conservation Area designation is proposed to be sent to all properties within the area shown in Appendix B, along with details of where the Conservation Area Appraisal can be viewed on the Council's website at the outset of the consultation. Officers will consider the feedback received before bringing a further report back to Planning Committee with advice on whether it remains the officer recommendation that a formal designation should be made.
- 2.7 If it is decided that a new Conservation Area should be designated to cover the area shown in Appendix B, subsequent to the designation taking effect, should proposals to preserve and enhance it (such as through the production of a management plan) be put forward, this will need to be discussed as part of a public meeting under s.71(2) of the Act. Currently there are no plans for developing a specific management plan for the area.

### **3. Policy framework implications**

- 3.1 Should a formal Conservation Area designation be made, the Council's Policies Map for the Local Plan would need to be amended accordingly to reflect this. Such a designation would be particularly relevant for the planning department (e.g., in relation to which policies would be applicable in the determination of planning applications in the area). It would also be relevant for Local Land Charges and property search requests, as the Conservation Area designation means that some extra planning controls and considerations would exist within the specified area. Whilst this is necessary to protect the historic and architectural elements which make the place special, they have the potential to affect owners who want to work on the outside of their building or any trees on their property.

### **4. Resource implications/Value for Money**

- 4.1 No additional resource has been required within the Planning Policy team to progress this project, and none is envisaged to be required in the future to complete the project. Costs are limited to the printing of a small number of letters and several copies of the Conservation Area Appraisal itself and advertising the proposal in the press. All of these activities would be covered by the existing Planning Policy budget for the 2022/23 financial year.

### **5. Legal implications**

- 5.1 There is the potential for the designation of a Conservation Area to be challenged through the courts. However, Officers will ensure that they comply with the legislative requirements for the designation process as set out in the relevant legislation to minimise this risk.

### **6. Equality implications**

- 6.1 The Council has a Public Sector Duty under the Equalities Act 2020 to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a Protected Characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between those who share a relevant characteristic and persons who do not share those characteristics.

in relation to the 9 'Protected Characteristics' stated within the Act.

- 6.2 An EqIA screening has been carried out by officers which can be viewed at Appendix C. This EqIA screening has picked up potential negative impacts on those with the protected characteristics of age and disability, however, it is not considered that a full EqIA is required as the Government requires Local Authorities to designate Conservation Areas through primary legislation where they have been identified to have special architectural or historic interest, and the Council is following this process. Also, personal circumstances can be weighed in the planning balance when determining planning applications.

## **7. Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications**

- 7.1 A Conservation Area designation, if made, would help to preserve and enhance the Borough's heritage assets in line with objective 8 of the adopted Runnymede 2030 Local Plan.

## **8. Timetable for Implementation**

- 8.1 The next steps towards the designation and implementation of the proposed Conservation Area at Caxton Avenue and Coombelands Lane would be a public consultation including residents within the proposed area of designation. Subsequently, officers would then consider all feedback received.
- 8.2 The responses to the consultation, together with any amendments made to the CAA in light of the comments received would then be presented to the Planning Committee along with a report recommending whether it is considered that a Conservation Area designation remains appropriate.
- 8.3 There is no set timetable to progress this work, however, the Planning Committee will be kept apprised of progress.

## **9. Conclusions**

- 9.1 The area shown in Appendix B is considered to have special architectural and historic interest which warrants the area being designated as a Conservation Area. Officers recommend that the public is now consulted on this proposal.

(To resolve)

### **Background papers**

Appendix A: copy of the draft Caxton Avenue Conservation Area Appraisal  
 Appendix B: map of the proposed Conservation Area  
 Appendix C: Equalities screening assessment