

Englefield Green Conservation Area (Planning Policy, Mike Corbett)

Synopsis of report:

To update the Planning Committee on the progress on work to review the existing Englefield Green Conservation Area and seek approval for public consultation on the proposed amendments to the Englefield Green Conservation Area boundary, as set out in the Englefield Green Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAAMP).

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

1. **APPROVE** the draft Englefield Green Conservation Area Appraisal, including the proposed boundary review, for public consultation for a period of (just over) six weeks from Monday 3rd July to Friday 18th August 2023.

1. Context of report

Conservation Area Legislation

- 1.1 The provisions for Conservation Area (CA) designation and management are set out in Government legislation 'Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Planning Act)'. The legislation requires Local Planning Authorities to 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 and enhance and designate as CAs.
- 1.2 In addition, it is the duty of a local planning authority from time to time to review these past designations and determine whether any parts, or any further parts of their area, should be designated as conservation areas; and, if so, they should designate those parts as CAs accordingly.
- 1.3 Understanding the character and significance of CAs is essential for managing change within them. It is a requirement under the Planning Act that all Local Planning Authorities formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of CAs within their area. It is also a requirement for CA guidance produced by or on behalf of Councils to be subject to public consultation, including a public meeting, and for the Council to have regard to any views expressed by consultees.

2. Report

- 2.1 Runnymede has a rich historic environment, with seven existing designated CAs and over 306 Statutorily Listed Buildings, as well as a number of Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Registered Historic Parks and Gardens.
- 2.2 The Council's adopted Runnymede 2030 Local Plan includes Policy EE5: Conservation Areas, which sets out detailed policy considerations to be taken into account when considering development within or affecting the setting of a CA, including views in or out, and the need for development to protect, conserve and wherever possible enhance the special interest, character and appearance of the CA. It also makes a clear commitment to reviewing the Borough's CAs, in accordance with its legislative duty.

- 2.3 A Conservation Area Appraisal can be used to help local planning authorities develop a management plan and develop appropriate policies for local and neighbourhood plans. A Conservation Area Appraisal helps to support local decision making and considers what features make a positive or negative contribution to the attractiveness and significance of existing Conservation Areas. It can also identify specific opportunities for beneficial change or the need for focused planning protection.
- 2.4 In February 2018, the Government awarded the Council 'design quality' grant funding for two years. Part of the funds awarded enabled the Council to employ independent heritage consultants, Purcell, to help review three of the Borough's existing CAs: Chertsey, Egham Town Centre and Egham Hythe. The funding could not extend to the review of all seven CAs; however, there has remained a commitment to reviewing the four remaining ones; Englefield Green, Thorpe, Basingstoke Canal and the Wey Navigation in due course, and when resources allow.
- 2.5 In 2021, there was sufficient resource and budget in the Planning Policy team to allow officers to progress a review of the Englefield Green Conservation Area (EGCA). Officers contacted Surrey County Council's (SCC's) Historic Environment Planning Team to ask them to assess the current EGCA, review its boundaries and to start work on a Conservation Area Appraisal.
- 2.6 As part of this review process, public consultation was undertaken in April and May 2021 to obtain the views of local residents, including a presentation held on 11th February 2021 (virtually due to Covid 19 restrictions in place at the time). The consultation focused on a number of key areas including:
- What positively contributes to the Conservation Area?
 - What factors detract from the Conservation Area?
 - What opportunities are there to enhance the Conservation Area?
 - Are the current boundaries appropriate?
 - Any other comments?
- 2.7 This consultation resulted in a total of 27 responses. The feedback to the above questions (and other submissions) was considered by SCC officers when developing the Draft Conservation Area Appraisal and its associated Management Plan. One of the main themes raised in the responses to the consultation, was potential additional properties / features in the area that should be included in the CA boundary (e.g., one suggestion was that it should be expanded down to the St Jude's Road area).
- 2.8 Other issues raised included parking, speed limits and the impact of Royal Holloway University of London on the area, and ways the area could be improved e.g., more sympathetic street furniture, reduction in the number of signs and management of the landscape of the areas / improved planting.
- 2.9 Following on from this consultation, and consideration of the comments made, SCC worked on developing the Draft CAAMP over the next two years. This has involved a walking site visit around the whole of the existing CA to identify areas for potential addition or removal from the current boundary, an extensive study of the area's history, including in-depth studies into individual properties, consulting historic maps and images as well as dialogue with interested local residents / parties to ascertain the potential age of specific parts of the EGCA.
- 2.10 As the EGCA boundary was last reviewed in 1978, and as it is a statutory duty for a local planning authority from time to time to review the past designation of CAs and

consider whether the boundaries are still relevant, consideration was given (by SCC) as to whether:

- The original boundary was drawn too tightly.
- The original boundary was drawn too loosely.
- Areas still have a character and appearance which is worthy of preservation and enhancement.
- Boundaries run around a space or plot to ensure a unified approach to management.

2.11 As part of the work, a review has been carried out of all the existing boundaries in the EGCA based on the above criteria. For each proposed change, a justification has been provided based on one of the above criteria.

2.12 From the above process, the following six areas are proposed for **removal** from the Conservation Area:

- 2-4 Crown Cottage and 5-7 Northcroft Road
- Engleston House, Barley Mow Road; 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 Oak Tree Drive; and 9, 11, 12, 14 Bulkeley Close
- Courtways Cottage
- 8-22 Clarence Drive, Belle House, Tree Tops, Oaklands and Brierwood
- 32-35 Great Charta Close
- 1-3 The Barons

2.13 The following three areas are proposed for **addition** to the Conservation Area:

- Round Oak Lodge
- Grounds of Castle Hill
- Grounds of Castle Hill Farm and Crown Farm

The justifications for the above proposed removals and additions to the EGCA boundary are set out in section 10 (see p.51) of the Draft CAAMP (see Appendix 1).

2.14 The review has been careful to ensure that the purpose of designation is genuinely considered. The potential changes to the 1978 CA boundary have been suggested to ensure that the properties, land and features that are included within the EGCA's boundaries are those that reflect the fact that the CA designation focuses on gentry houses that were built around the unenclosed village green, as this is the key historical feature / factor that led to the development of this part of the village.

2.15 Once the Draft CAAMP had been produced, officers undertook an informal and limited consultation, first with the Councillors of the Planning Committee and those representing the Englefield Green wards, and then with the Neighbourhood Forum and Resident's Association (the latter two as organisations and not the individual members that constitute them). This was to obtain any views, feedback or comments on the proposed document and potential boundary changes before the document goes out for public consultation. There were no changes made to the Conservation Area Appraisal arising from this exercise.

2.16 Now that the Draft CAAMP has been through this informal consultation process, officers are seeking permission from the Planning Committee to undertake full public consultation from Monday 3rd July for a period of (just over) six weeks until Friday 18th

August 2023. The Draft CAAMP document, which will be subject to public consultation, is shown at Appendix 1, a map identifying the existing and proposed CA boundaries are shown in Appendix 2 and the summary of the 2021 consultation responses received (and SCC's response to them) are set out in Appendix 3.

- 2.17 The Draft CAAMP consultation will involve a number of methods of contacting relevant and interested parties to obtain their views and feedback. This includes:
- Emailing those on the Planning Policy Team's consultation database
 - Writing a letter to each property within the current and proposed Conservation Area boundary, as well as those properties that are adjacent to these.
 - Holding a public meeting (location TBC at the time of this report) in Englefield Green on the 10th of July 2023 with the SCC officer who produced the Conservation Area Appraisal giving a presentation followed by a Q and A session.
 - The dissemination of leaflets to 'hotspots' within the Conservation Area that local people frequent (as suggested by local residents) to include the Village Centre, the Hub, the Health Centre plus one or two of the nearby shops.

- 2.18 Any consultation responses received will be fully considered by SCC before producing the final draft CAAMP.

3. Policy framework implications

- 3.1 The updated CAAMP (if adopted by the Council) will support policies contained in the adopted Runnymede 2030 Local Plan and will further assist in assessing planning applications for new development by providing up-to-date information in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021.

4. Resource implications

The costs of undertaking this work have been met through existing budget allocated to the Planning Policy Team, with the main expense being contracting SCC to the sum of £10,010 to undertake most of the work preparing the CAAMP, replying to the consultation responses and attending the public meeting.

- 4.1 As a general point, Conservation Areas have some resource and financial implications in terms of additional tree applications and increased publicity requirements for applications. There is also additional internal consultation required for planning applications within such areas to ensure their conservation. These costs are covered within the existing Development Management budget.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1 The Planning Act sets out that Local Planning Authorities should formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of CAs within their area and that these are periodically reviewed. By undertaking this review and publishing it, the Council would satisfy its duty to review the existing CA within Englefield Green. The remaining three Conservation Areas (Thorpe, Basingstoke Canal and the Wey Navigation) will be reviewed in due course, and when resources allow.

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 EqlA screening has been carried out by officers and can be viewed at Appendix 4. The EqlA screening has picked up potential negative impacts on those with the protected characteristics of age and disability where new areas of land and properties are proposed to be added to the Conservation Area designation. It is not however considered that a full EqlA 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 to review these designations from time to time. The Council is following this process. Also, personal circumstances can be weighed in the planning balance when determining planning applications.

7. Other implications

7.1 There are no known other implications because of the designation of the EGCA.

8. Conclusions

8.1 It is considered that the proposed boundary changes to the EGCA are required to help ensure developments that they make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area better reveal its significance, is better able to reflect and enhance its existing local character and distinctiveness and prevents development which would lead to harm to or loss of significance within the Conservation Area.

8.2 The Planning Committee is asked to approve the draft Englefield Green Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan for public consultation.

(To resolve)

Background papers

Appendix 1 – Draft Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan for Englefield Green;

Appendix 2 – Map of existing and proposed boundaries of Englefield Green Conservation Area (boundary changes proposed); and

Appendix 3 - Summary of the responses received and Surrey County Council's responses to the 2021 public consultation on the Englefield Green Conservation Area.

Appendix 4 – Equalities Impact Assessment screening