

**Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan for the Church Green
Conservation Area**

Relevant Portfolio Holders	Cllr Matt Dormer/Cllr Rouse
Portfolio Holder Consulted	No
Relevant Head of Service	Ruth Bamford
Ward(s) Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) Consulted	No
Non-Key Decision	Non Key

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 The Council has a statutory duty under s69(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to designate any areas which they consider to be of special architectural or historic interest as Conservation Areas. The Council has a further duty under s71(1) to formulate and prepare proposals for the preservation and enhancement of its Conservation Areas.
- 1.2 A Draft Conservation Area Appraisal has been prepared for the Church Green Conservation Area. The character appraisal identifies the factors and features which make the area special, based on an in-depth assessment of the area's buildings, spaces, evolution and sense of place. The Conservation Management Plan provides a strategy for the management of the conservation area in a way that will protect and enhance its character and appearance and support the wider regeneration of the town centre.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Executive supports the draft Church Green Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan.
- 2.2 That the Executive approves a 6 week public consultation period. The result of this consultation will be reported back to the Executive in due course.

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 The cost of producing and consulting on the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan will be met by the existing Strategic Planning Team budget.

Legal Implications

- 3.2 The Council has a statutory duty under s69(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to designate any areas which they consider to be of special architectural or historic interest as Conservation Areas. The Council has a further duty under s71(1) to formulate and prepare proposals for the preservation and enhancement of its Conservation Areas.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.3 There is a statutory requirement under section 69 of the Planning Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990, that Local Planning Authorities from time to time consider whether there are further parts of its area which should be designated as conservation areas. In addition, the Council has a further duty under s71(1) to formulate and prepare proposals for the preservation and enhancement of its Conservation Areas.
- 3.4 The Character Appraisal identifies the factors and features which make a conservation area special, based on an in-depth assessment of an area's buildings, spaces, evolution and sense of place. The Management Plan then provides a strategy for the management of the conservation area in a way that will protect and enhance its character and appearance, and support the wider regeneration of the Town Centre
- 3.5 The Church Green Conservation Area (CA) was designated on 6th August 1971 by Worcestershire County Council. It was then extended on 15th November 1978 by Redditch Borough Council and further extended in 2006, following the previous Conservation Area Appraisal, also by the Borough Council.
- 3.6 The CA is focused around the Church of St Stephen and the surrounding amenity space. This area is enclosed by two pedestrianised streets and one roadway; Market Place, Church Green West and Church Green East, all remnants of an older street pattern. The buildings to the east of Church Green East are included from number 3 to 24 & 25, in addition 1 & 3 Alcester Street, which is a continuation of Church Green East. Along Church Green West the run of buildings on the west side from Red House as far as Unicorn Hill also fall into the CA, and it also extends partly along Church Road, William Street, Unicorn Hill and Bates Hill, which all extend westwards from Church Green West. Finally, to the south of the Church the buildings to the south of Market Place from the corner with Evesham Walk as far as the library and the remnants of the historic buildings along Evesham Walk up to the entrance to the Kingfisher Centre, are also included.
- 3.7 These buildings are predominantly in use as offices and retail, with public buildings, including a hospital and what was originally the Library and Scientific Institute on the west side of Church Green West. The buildings are predominantly 19th century, but there are earlier 18th century properties as well as some from the 20th century. The CA is largely pedestrianised, although Church Green West forms a prominent north south vehicular route through the centre, passing to the

west of St Stephen's, and continuing onto Unicorn Hill, with a turn off on to Church Road. The area to the east is pedestrianised.

- 3.8 The special interest of the Church Green Conservation Area (CA) can be summarised as follows; It comprises the historic central core of the town of Redditch, centred on the church of St Stephen and the public open space, including the churchyard, which surrounds it. The space is enclosed predominantly by relatively modest late 18th century and 19th century buildings, on Church Green East, Church Green West and Market Place, although Church Green West has some larger 19th century public buildings. These buildings on Church Green West were added to the CA in 2006 along with the remaining historic buildings contiguous with this core on Evesham Walk, Church Road, William Street, Unicorn Hill and Bates Hill. The buildings on these latter streets are predominantly 19th century and modest in character. The CA benefits from a number of buildings having been identified as heritage assets in their own right, with 15 listed buildings and 17 buildings on the Local Heritage List. Much of the CA is pedestrianised, including Church Green East, Market Place, Evesham Street and the top section of Alcester Street which falls within the CA, and this contributes to its sense of being a public open space.
- 3.9 The CA has many positive features, which are noted in the Conservation Area Appraisal. It sits at the centre of the town with the Grade II Church as the focus, surrounded by green space. The historic buildings which surround the Green, both listed and locally listed, enhance the setting of the Church and this open space. Being predominantly pedestrianised it is a safe and attractive space for pedestrians. There are, however, some issues which potentially threaten the character of the CA. These include;
- Poor state of the public realm
 - Poor state of shop fronts
 - Parking around the church
 - Parking on the corner of Evesham Walk/Unicorn Hill
 - Vacant Units
- 3.10 It is also suggested that 5-11 Alcester Street are incorporated into the CA. It would seem to be anomalous that they have been left out especially as 5 and 7 are a continuation of 3, and 9 and 11 are the last historic buildings in this run and probably date to the late 18th century. All the buildings are sympathetic in terms of character with the existing buildings in the CA.
- 3.11 The attached Conservation Management Plan identifies strategies to protect and enhance the character and significance of the CA by addressing the issues identified in the appraisal. In terms of the issues noted above proposals include;
- Poor state of the public realm - Working with Highways at the County Council and NWEDR to finalise a uniform scheme of public realm works,

probably following what has been introduced in Alcester Street. This is under way.

- Poor state of shop fronts- encourage the reinstatement of historic detailing when opportunities arise through the development control process and Investigating the possibility of obtaining grant funding to finance a programme of upgrading shop fronts.
 - Parking around the church - Approach the Church with the aim of discussing their parking requirements. Look at ways of accommodating their needs while at the same time improving the appearance of the space around the Church.
 - Parking on the corner of Evesham Walk/Unicorn Hill- The Local Authority is in the process of issuing a Traffic Order to prevent parking in this area, but there will be a continual need to monitor the situation and liaise with Town Centre Management at RBC and NWEDR.
 - Vacant Units- RBC, with the assistance of NWEDR is in the process of submitting a Town Investment Plan as part of the Town Deal Program to secure £25m. A Town Deal Board has been established, and the Board through consultation with the public and stakeholders will prioritise projects which will include work in the Town Centre. Work with partners at RBC and NWEDR to obtain funding to improve the appearance of the CA and in particular units within it to make the Town Centre a more attractive to prospective occupiers.
- 3.12 The proposed action points are in accordance with national policy guidance, local policies and follow on from the Conservation Area Appraisal. As noted above there have been discussions between NWEDR and the County Council regarding the upgrading of the Public Realm, and the intention is to continue working with NWEDR in respect of other elements of town centre regeneration.
- 3.13 Every year Historic England asks local authorities to assess whether listed buildings and conservations areas can be assessed as being 'At Risk' using their assessment criteria. Currently many town centre conservation areas are at risk, and the future is uncertain for almost all of them. It remains unclear how the nation's economy will be affected following the decision to leave the European Union, and the impact of Covid 19 is only likely to make the situation worse in the short term. Church Green Conservation Area, for the reasons identified in the appraisal, and noted above, now meets the criteria for being 'At Risk'. If this is formally recognised, the Conservation Area may become eligible for funding from Historic England to address some of these issues.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.14 There are not considered to be any customer/equality or diversity implications. The consultation will be in line with the published consultation processes for planning identified in the Statement of Community Involvement

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 There are no associated risks with this report

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Church Green Conservation Area Appraisal and Conservation Management Plan

AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name: Mary Worsfold – Principal Conservation Officer
email: m.worsfold@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Tel.: 01527 881329