

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

14 June 2007

Report of the Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Council Decision

1 CONSERVATION AREAS

This report provides a progress update on the work being carried out with regards to the Conservation Areas in the Borough. Following consultation with Parish Councils and other parties, this report also recommends the re-adoption of 4 Conservation Area Appraisals and a programme for future work.

1.1 Re-adoption of Conservation Area Appraisals

1.1.1 The Planning and Transportation Advisory Board in October 2006 recommended that the existing Conservation Area Appraisals for Ditton, East Malling Village, Paddlesworth, Snodland, Stansted and West Malling could be re-adopted subject to consultation with Parish Councils and other local groups. The relevant Parish Councils and local groups have responded and agree that the following Conservation Area Appraisals should be re-adopted subject to some minor word changes and updates as per the table in **Annex A** of this report.

- Ivy Hatch
- West Malling
- East Malling Village
- Ditton

1.1.2 The re-adoption of the Conservation Area Appraisals for Stansted, and Paddlesworth, Snodland will be progressed and reported to the next PTAB meeting.

1.2 Conservation Area Appraisals for Tonbridge, Aylesford, Holborough Mill and Mill Street, East Malling

1.2.1 With PDG monies earmarked for the appointment of specialist consultants to embark on the above work, a consultants' brief has been prepared. It is the intention that an appointment will be confirmed and work will commence in

September. The work on Tonbridge will be carried out in close collaboration with the Tonbridge Civic Society. The timeframe for the production of this work is to be agreed with the consultants, with Tonbridge and Aylesford being the first priorities. Members will be updated on progress at the PTAB meeting scheduled for October.

1.3 Conservation Area Appraisals for the Remaining Conservation Areas.

- 1.3.1 The remaining conservation areas are varied in their size, nature and complexity. Many of the appraisals will be straightforward, whilst some others are more complex. Those conservation areas that are more straightforward will be dealt with in-house first, adding to the experience and expertise that is being built-up in Planning Services through specialist training. As resources permit, the more complex areas will also be dealt with in-house and/or through the use of specialist consultants if this is considered to be more appropriate.
- 1.3.2 Specialist training for all planning officers in the Development Control and Policy Sections has recently been completed. This has involved special workshops with experts from the University of the West of England on understanding the architecture, periods and vocabulary of the historic environment and how best to appraise the character of conservation areas.
- 1.3.3 Following this training, each planning officer will take responsibility for preparing one conservation area appraisal (incorporating management plans) over the next twelve months, following the methodology of the highly regarded West Malling model. This approach will make a major contribution to the aim of preparing an appraisal and management plan for each of the Borough's conservation areas. With the twelve month time frame, this can be done taking into account other work pressures and commitments.
- 1.3.4 Once the first 'batch' of in-house appraisals and management plans has been prepared and adopted, the situation will be reviewed and the possibility of a second round investigated.
- 1.3.5 The table at **Annex B** sets out those appraisals and management plans that are recommended to be prepared in the first round.

1.4 Monitoring Conservation Areas, Appraisals and Management Plans

- 1.4.1 In the past, Conservation Areas have been reviewed through the development plan process, even though their statutory designation takes place outside of that process. New Best Value Performance Indicators have raised the profile of Conservation Area Appraisals and their associated management plans. In particular they highlight the importance of having up-to-date appraisals for conservation areas. Up-to-date means adopted within the last five years. With 59 conservation areas in the Borough and limited resources, achieving appraisals and management plans for each conservation area will be a challenge for the Council. However, in many cases, the conservation area is unlikely to come under

much pressure for change because its location provides other protection (for example, if the conservation area is in the Green Belt or the AONB). The programme of Conservation Area Appraisals has regard to this fact and will be monitored and reviewed on a two-yearly basis and reported to members through this Advisory Board.

1.5 New or amended Conservation Areas

- 1.5.1 Because of the nature of Conservation Areas it is unlikely that there are any new areas that have not already been identified. The extent of existing areas will be reviewed as Conservation Area Appraisals are undertaken. However, the forthcoming consultation on the Managing Development and the Environment DPD will provide an opportunity for the community to be consulted generally on the issue of Conservation Areas. Any potential new areas identified through that process can then be subject to the necessary appraisal process as a precursor to formal designation.

1.6 Legal Implications

- 1.6.1 The designation of conservation areas falls within the Council's remit. However, there is no legal obligation to prepare appraisals and management plans.

1.7 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.7.1 Preparation of conservation area appraisals and management plans is good practice and provides value for money in the protection, enhancement and management of conservation areas. This work is resource intensive and so will be carried out as resources allow. Nevertheless, there is funding for the key priorities to be addressed through existing budgets including the Planning Delivery Grant.

1.8 Risk Assessment

- 1.8.1 Up-to-date conservation area appraisals and management plans provide robust information to inform emerging policies and assist with development control decisions.

1.9 Recommendations

- 1.9.1 Subject to the minor amendments identified under **Annex A** to this report, the Council **BE RECOMMENDED** to re-adopt the West Malling, East Malling Village, Ivy Hatch and Ditton Conservation Area Appraisals.
- 1.9.2 Cabinet **BE RECOMMENDED** to agree the approach and the priorities for the preparation of further Conservation Area Appraisals as set out in this report.

Background papers:

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Nil

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