

HERITAGE INFORMATION AND ADVICE TO SUPPORT THE LOCAL PLAN INCLUDING INFORMATION IN RELATION TO CONSERVATION AREAS

Item HP 25/32 referred from Housing and Planning Scrutiny Select Committee of 15 July 2025

The report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health set out the approach the Council should take in relation to obtaining heritage information and evidence to support the emerging Local Plan, including progressing work on Conservation Area Statements and Appraisals. In doing so, the report also considered advice from the Heritage Strategy [Annex 2], which was produced in 2024 to support the Local Plan.

Members acknowledged that information and evidence on heritage matters, including Conservation Area Statements / Appraisals, would provide information to help inform future change, development and design with regard to the sensitivities of the borough's historic environment and its unique character, ensuring that development could make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness as set out in paragraph 203 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Careful consideration was given to a Conservation Area Appraisal / Statement Priority List, attached at Annex 1, which set out each Conservation Area within the borough, the size of the Conservation Area and whether a Conservation Area Appraisal already existed and the date of the Appraisal, where one had been undertaken previously. It was noted that out of the 60 Conservations Areas within the borough, 20 Areas had an Appraisal that detailed the aspects of their character which made them significant, although 16 of these were published between 2001 and 2011, and the remaining 40 Areas did not currently have a Statement or Appraisal at all.

Members appreciated that obtaining full Conservation Area Appraisals, either new or updated, for 60 Conservation Areas was not achievable within the Local Plan timetable given the deadline to submit a plan by December 2026. Therefore, a list of priority areas for which Conservation Area Statements were required to be obtained to support the emerging Local Plan were proposed in a table under paragraph 7.5.3 of the report.

Furthermore, Members recognised that where a Conservation Area Statement was prepared, it would be necessary to progress full Conservation Area Appraisals as well, as Conservation Area Statements were only a temporary measure to ensure that information was available in the absence of a full Conservation Area Appraisal, particularly for those Conservation Areas identified in Phase A and Phase B as set out in Annex 1. Therefore, an additional cost would be incurred should Members support producing Conservation Area Statements for all Conservation Areas that did not currently have a Conservation Area Appraisal rather than focusing on producing

full Conservation Area Appraisals where necessary in the identified priority order. However, on the grounds of treating all Conservation Areas equally and ensuring up-to-date information, albeit in a brief form, was available for all the Conservation Areas to support the Local Plan process and development management functions, it was proposed by Councillor King (Chair) and seconded by Councillor Palmer that option (a) under paragraph 3.1.5 of the report be agreed by the Committee. Following a formal vote, there was majority support for the proposal.

Reference was also made to a draft Settlement Hierarchy [Annex 3], which set out the emerging settlement hierarchy and settlements considered to be sustainable.

Finally, due regard was given to the finance and value for money consideration, the risk assessment and the legal implications outlined in the report.

RECOMMENDED*: That

- (1) the approach set out within this paper to progressing heritage information and evidence to support the Local Plan, be agreed;
- (2) the approach to progressing Conservation Area Statements for those areas considered to be a priority to support the Local Plan, as set out in Table 3 under paragraph 7.5.3 of the report, be agreed;
- (3) it be noted that, as part of the evidence gathering approach for the Local Plan, work would be progressed in relation to identifying any heritage issues as relevant to potential site allocations within the Local Plan process to ensure that sufficient information was provided at each key stage of the Local Plan process;
- (4) the priority in progressing the additional work between the various Conservation Areas as set out in Annex 1, be agreed;
- (5) short Conservation Area Statements be produced for all Conservation Areas that did not currently have a Conservation Area Appraisal as a starting point to ensure that information was available for all Conservation Areas in the borough; it be noted that this would be at extra cost and would take both financial and staffing resource away from progressing full Conservation Area Appraisals for those that did not currently have one or where Appraisals required a review and update; and
- (6) it be noted that the Heritage Strategy, attached at Annex 2, would be made publicly available following this meeting of the Housing and Planning Scrutiny Select Committee on 15 July 2025.

***Recommended to Cabinet**