



**AGENDA ITEM:**

**PLANNING COMMITTEE:  
8 December 2016**

**CABINET: 10 January 2017**

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**Report of:** Director of Development and Regeneration

**Relevant Portfolio Holder:** Councillor J. Hodson

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**SUBJECT: GRANVILLE PARK CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL UPDATE**

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Wards affected: Aughton and Downholland Ward

**1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To consider the draft Conservation Area Appraisal for Granville Park and report back to members the results of the public consultation on the updated document. To consider the representations received and seek support for the proposals identified in the Character Appraisal.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO PLANNING COMMITTEE**

- 2.1 That support is given to the Character Appraisal update for Granville Park Conservation Area, including the associated Design Guide and the recommendations within the update for the extension of the Conservation Area boundary and making of a new Article 4 Direction as identified in Appendices A, B, C and D appended to this report.

**3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET**

- 3.1 That the Character Appraisal update for Granville Park Conservation Area and the Design Guide appended to this report (Appendix A and B) including the provisions to extend the Conservation Area boundary (as set out in Appendix C) and make a new Article 4 Direction (Appendix C and D) be approved subject to consideration of any agreed comments from Planning Committee.

- 3.2 That Cabinet delegate authority to the Director of Development and Regeneration in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning to make the necessary arrangements to inform residents and to publish the appraisal documents including the management proposals.
  - 3.3 That Cabinet delegate authority to the Director of Development and Regeneration in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning to make the arrangements to amend the Conservation Area boundary and make the Article 4 Direction , to inform residents of the changes, carry out the relevant consultations and report back to a future Cabinet to confirm the Article 4 Direction.
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#### **4.0 BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 The review and update of the character appraisal for the Granville Park Conservation Area is part of a rolling programme of appraisals of all the Conservation Areas in West Lancashire. The Borough Council has an obligation under Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to review, from time to time, its Conservation Area designations, and under Section 71 of this Act to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these areas.

#### **5.0 THE PURPOSE OF CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISALS AND THE REVIEW**

- 5.1 The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 imposes a duty on local planning authorities to designate as Conservation Areas any “areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”. Conservation area appraisals aim to identify and re-affirm the special architectural or historic interest of conservation areas, clarify any issues relating to boundaries and identify ways to strengthen their commitment to manage the historic environment.
- 5.2 Historic England Advice Note 1 (Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management, 2016), states that the outcome of a conservation area review might typically be an addendum to the existing appraisal, recording what has changed, confirming (or redefining) the special interest that warrants designation, setting out any new recommendations and revising the area’s management strategy.
- 5.3 It is generally accepted that Conservation areas, which are largely composed of unlisted dwellings, are particularly vulnerable to change through work carried out under normal residential ‘permitted development rights’ e.g. altering windows, doors or roofs, removing chimneys, erecting porches, creating new areas of hardstanding, erecting or demolishing walls and painting the exterior of a building. Whilst this in most cases will be well meaning renovation or home

improvement, the incremental and cumulative nature of changes can harm an area's character and appearance.

- 5.4 The last full appraisal of Granville Park Conservation Area was in 1997. Since that time the area has undergone a degree of change and has, like other areas in the Borough, been subject to increased development pressure, fuelled largely by the attractive nature of the properties and environment. Whilst the conservation area has an existing Article 4(2) Direction applied to it, the planning measure only covers parts of the area. Its success in controlling minor changes to properties has therefore been limited. Part of the Appraisal process requires consideration of changes that have occurred over the years since the previous Appraisal which may compel the revision of this additional control.

## **6.0 THE REVIEW PROCEDURE**

- 6.1 As part of this Appraisal update an objective study was conducted assessing the contribution (both architecturally and historically) of individual properties in the Conservation Area. This work included a photographic survey and objective assessment of properties against a list of criteria. The results of the exercise identify the '*contribution*' made by buildings measured against the key characteristics of the Conservation Area (buildings can either have a positive, neutral or negative contribution). This information is illustrated in plan form and is included in the draft character appraisal for the Conservation Area.
- 6.2 As part of the preparation for the review, all residents within the Conservation Area were invited to a workshop which took place on 12 April 2016 at the Council Offices in Ormskirk. Twelve local residents attended with a further three supplying comments after the event. The workshop presented an opportunity for residents to discuss conservation related issues and what contributes towards the special character of the Conservation Area. The comments made at the Workshop have fed into the Appraisal update.
- 6.3 The results of the study and building assessments, described above, were presented at the workshop with local residents. This also offered an opportunity for early consultation and from the event emerged a number of issues and suggestions which we sought to address and include in the draft appraisal update. These are outlined in paragraphs 6.4 – 6.8 below.
- 6.4 The potential for extending the boundary of the Conservation Area was raised during the workshop. Background survey work for the appraisal had identified one potential area for extension – the Cockbeck Tavern which lies just beyond the southern boundary of the area at the junction with Town Green Lane. The former pub building was highlighted as playing a significant role in the setting of the Conservation Area, displaying some of the same key characteristics (see Section 5 of the draft appraisal) as the properties within the existing Conservation Area. Visually it is an important focal point and clearly frames one of the main entrances to the Conservation Area from Town Green Lane.

- 6.5 The resident workshop group agreed that there has been growing pressure for modernisation of properties in Granville Park in recent years. It was highlighted that there are several properties (particularly Phase 2 properties which date from around 1901-1945) which currently fall outside the controls provided by the existing Article 4 Direction and as such are under increasing pressure from 'home improvements'. Given that many of these properties still have original features i.e. stained and leaded glass windows it was agreed that the continuing lack of control would have a negative impact upon the character of individual properties and the character and appearance of the wider Conservation Area.
- 6.6 Given this and the changes that have occurred over the last 20 years, the Council feels that making an Article 4 Direction across the whole of the Granville Park Conservation Area would be an appropriate measure in order to prevent further insensitive alterations to properties, which make a positive contribution to the area's character, and prevent further threats to the key characteristics highlighted in the Appraisal. This proposal is illustrated in Appendix C.
- 6.7 Over the last decade we have seen a rise in the provision of domestic micro energy generation and in particular the use of solar panels. Since the previous appraisal, the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (GPDO) has changed, allowing for the installation of solar photo voltaic (PV) or solar thermal equipment in certain locations on buildings without the need for Planning Permission. At present there is no planning control over the installation of these solar generating systems on the roofs of properties (subject to certain conditions) within a Conservation Area. Some solar PV/thermal panels have already been installed in Granville Park in recent years. Their installation on the roofs of properties, particularly on those elevations facing on to the road, can obscure, to some extent, the original roof covering and result in harm being caused to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The recommendation supported by a number of those present at the resident's workshop, is to extend the development covered in the schedule of a new Article 4 Direction to include Part 14, Class A (the installation, alteration or replacement of micro-generation solar PV or solar thermal equipment on domestic properties) so that this form of development will require Planning Permission. Details of the kinds of development covered by the schedule of the proposed Article 4 Direction can be found in Appendix D.
- 6.8 Finally, we have sought to produce specific design guidance for those seeking to carry out development in Granville Park (including residents and developers). Residents who attended the workshop supported this idea and felt that it would be helpful in guiding home owners to make informed choices before committing to development proposals. For this reason the 'Granville Park Conservation Area Design Guide' was produced as part of the appraisal (attached to this Report as Appendix B).

## **7.0 PUBLIC CONSULTATION - RESPONSES**

- 7.1 The draft appraisal document (attached to this report as Appendix A) has been prepared using, for base information, the previous 1997 Character Appraisal for

the area and the building assessments outlined in 6.1. A letter was sent to all property addresses in the Conservation Area and to Aughton Parish Council. Copies of the Draft Character Appraisal were made available on the Council's website and hard copies placed in Ormskirk Library, the Council Offices and were available on request. The closing date for comments was 4 November 2016.

- 7.2 A public exhibition was held in Aughton Village Hall on 27 October 2016 between 2pm and 7pm. Residents were informed of the exhibition and the event was publicised in the Local Press. The exhibition gave local people the opportunity to view display boards outlining the issues within the Conservation Area together with the recommendations for change and also provided an opportunity for discussion with Conservation staff from the Planning department. The exhibition was attended by around 40 people. Those with views on the content of the Appraisal document including the Design Guide and the specific proposals to alter the conservation boundary and provide a new Article 4 Direction were encouraged to submit comments during the consultation period.
- 7.3 In total of 8 comments were received on the draft documents (see attached Appendix E for further details including our responses to the comments made).
- 7.4 All responses were supportive of the extension of the Conservation Area to include the Cockbeck Tavern. Many also expressed their support for the new Article 4 Direction as recommended, including the additional control over Solar PV and Solar thermal panels. A number of respondents suggested some minor amendments to either clarify or add some further detail to the written content of the documents. Some of these have been accepted and changes made to the appropriate document (see Appendix E for details). In some cases issues not related to planning were raised and this is explained within the response.
- 7.5 Six residents have stated that they believe that the bowling green to the rear of the Cockbeck Tavern should also be included within the Conservation Area extension. Five of these people also felt that the shops on Town Green Lane should be included within the revised boundary. When considering boundary changes the Council is advised to take a cautious approach to ensure that the special architectural or historic interest is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack the special interest. I note that the bowling green, adjacent shops, cottages and train station along Town Green Lane all have a distinctive and different character. They are not felt to share enough of the key characteristics of the existing Granville Park Conservation Area outlined in the Appraisal document to justify their inclusion.

## **8.0 PROPOSED ACTIONS**

- 8.1 Taking into account the comments received through the consultation we propose to take forward the recommendations identified in the draft appraisal. These are set out below.
- 8.2 Amending the boundary of Granville Park Conservation Area to include The Cockbeck Tavern, including its associated car park to the rear, on Town Green

Lane. The inclusion of the former public house will help preserve the appearance of the southern entrance into Granville Park.

- 8.3 The provision of a new Article 4 Direction which covers extensions and alterations to dwelling houses, alterations to roofs, porches, ancillary buildings or enclosures within the curtilage, the provision of hard surfaces, satellite antenna, the removal of chimneys, the erection and alteration of boundary walls and fences, and the painting of houses. The Article 4 Direction will also include Part 14, Class A (the installation, alteration or replacement of micro-generation solar PV or solar thermal equipment on domestic properties) so that this form of development will require Planning Permission. It is important to stress that the Article 4 Direction only covers elevations of a dwellinghouse which front onto a highway, waterway or public open space. The proposed schedule for the new Article 4 Direction is set out in Appendix D.
- 8.4 The new Article 4 Direction will be applied to cover the whole boundary of the Granville Park Conservation Area.
- 8.5 The promotion, publication and use of the new Granville Park Design Guidance which forms part of the Appraisal.
- 8.6 Historic England in its Advice Note 1 identifies the importance that management strategies can have in helping retain an areas character. A Management Plan is developed from the review of the Conservation Area Appraisal as an essential tool in ensuring the special character of the area is preserved and enhanced. The following issues and proposed management/actions have been identified within Granville Park and are set out in further detail in the Management Plan section (section 11) of the appraisal document:
- Inappropriate boundary treatments to properties and public spaces (including the quarry) – control of boundary treatments would be extended by the provision of a new Article 4 Direction.
  - Insensitively designed new buildings, including extensions to existing properties – the Design Guide produced as part of the update provides more detailed design advice to be applied in Granville Park Conservation Area.
  - Poorly maintained buildings and sites – advice to building owners is available through the Council’s Planning Pre-application advice service. Sites identified will be monitored.
  - Loss of original and traditional features on buildings such as the loss of traditional windows, roofing materials and the rendering of brick buildings – control of such alterations and in particular the loss of features on road side elevations will be extended across the whole of the Conservation Area through the new Article 4 Direction.
  - Large areas of hard standing or paving to the front of dwellings – as above, the recommended Article 4 Direction will help control the provision of hard standing and the loss of front gardens over the entire Conservation Area.
  - Loss of trees within the Conservation Area – the management plan identifies where there are opportunities for replacement.

- The wish to see improvements to the Quarry – the management plan establishes the Council's support for proposals which would encourage more diverse use of the Quarry and protect and enhance its biodiversity value.

8.7 It is proposed that that these issues will continue to be tackled through a number of means including the control of development and the use of enforcement action where it is appropriate to do so. Extending control over development through a new Article 4 Direction covering the whole Conservation Area should help to prevent the erosion of character through actions such as the loss of traditional features and materials. Officers will also continue to provide advice to owners as requested and make residents aware of potential funding such as Conservation Area Grant schemes and the Hedging Grant scheme.

8.8 Subject to approval of the recommendations, the procedure for making an Article 4 Direction requires consultation with any residents affected by the changes, including a press notice to be published. The draft Direction identified will come into force on undertaking the notification with residents and can remain in place for up to 6 months. Any representations from property owners affected by the Directions will be included in a further report back to Cabinet prior to deciding whether or not to confirm the Direction.

## **9.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS/COMMUNITY STRATEGY**

9.1 There are no significant sustainability impacts associated with this report and, in particular, no significant impact on crime and disorder.

9.2 The need to continue with efforts to protect and improve the quality of the Borough's environment including the streetscene, natural and built heritage of our towns, villages and countryside has been identified as a key issue in the Sustainable Community Strategy.

9.3 The historic environment has an important role to play in contributing to sustainability in West Lancashire. The appraisals help value the distinctiveness of the local areas and provide a better understanding of the state of the physical and historical environment. The work seeks aims to improve the environment and cultural heritage of the wider community.

## **10.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are no significant financial or resource implications arising from this report although a programme of small scheme enhancement works including a Traditional Features Grant Scheme is currently supported via the Capital Programme.

10.2 However there are circumstances in which local authorities may be liable to pay compensation having made an Article 4 Direction, although the potential liability is limited by time limits that apply. Compensation in all cases can only be claimed

for abortive expenditure or other loss or damage caused by the removal of the permitted development rights. .

## **11.0 RISK ASSESSMENT**

11.1 The work undertaken is an important part of the Council's duty to preserve its Conservation Areas. Under existing legislation Councils are required to formulate and publish proposals for the management of its designated Conservation Areas.

11.2 Article 4 Directions provide planning controls over the impacts of minor development on the character and appearance of Conservation Areas. Failure to apply the Article 4 Directions weakens our management of these historic areas and risks the Authority not fulfilling its duty to preserve the historic character and appearance of both Conservation Areas.

## **12.0 CONCLUSIONS**

12.1 The review of the Borough's conservation areas remains important work, which is essential for the proper management of our important historic places. The review work has confirmed that Granville Park Conservation Area retains its special architectural or historic interest.

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### **Background Documents**

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| 2016 | Advice Note 1: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management (Historic England) |
| 1997 | Granville Park Conservation Area Appraisal  |

### **Equality Impact Assessment**

There is a significant direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders. Therefore an Equality Impact Assessment is required. A formal equality impact assessment is attached as an Appendix F to this report, the results of which have been taken into account when undertaking the actions detailed within this article.



## **Appendices**

Appendix A – Granville Park Conservation Area Draft Character Appraisal

Appendix B – Granville Park Conservation Area Design Guide

Appendix C - Plan of Conservation Area extension and new Article 4 Direction boundary.

Appendix D - Article 4 Direction schedule

Appendix E – Granville Park Conservation Area Consultation responses

Appendix F - Equality Impact Assessment