

Langport & Huish Episcopi – Conservation Area Appraisal and Designation of Extensions to Conservation Area (Executive Decision)

Strategic Director: Rina Singh *Strategic Director Place and Performance*
Assistant Director: Martin Woods *Assistant Director Economy*
Group Manager: Dave Norris *Development Manager*
Lead Officer: Adron Duckworth *Conservation Manager*
Contact Details: Greg.venn@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462595

Purpose of the Report

To approve the recently prepared Conservation Area Appraisal and to formally designate an extension to the conservation area.

Public Interest

This report proposes the adoption of the Conservation Area Assessment for Langport & Huish Episcopi, and alterations to the conservation boundary. Conservation areas are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. The Langport & Huish Episcopi Conservation Area was first designated in 1971 and extended in 1989.

The District Council is required to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas. This can be achieved through conservation area appraisals. In order that designation is effective in conserving the special interest, planning decisions must be based on a thorough understanding of the conservation area's character.

Appraisals are therefore essential tools for the planning process and to manage informed intervention. They will provide a sound basis, defensible on appeal, for the relevant development plan policies and development control decisions and will form the framework for effective management of change. The appraisal should provide the District Council and the local community with a clear idea of what features and details contribute to the character of the conservation area and how these may relate to the wider proposals for regeneration.

Recommendations

- (1) Approve the Langport & Huish Episcopi Conservation Area Appraisal (attached as Appendix A)
- (2) Formally designate revisions to the Langport & Huish Episcopi conservation area boundary
- (3) Advertise the extension to the designated area in accordance with the requirements of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Background

Conservation areas are areas of 'special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. Section 69 of the

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 imposes a duty on local authorities to identify appropriate parts of their areas, to designate them as conservation areas and to keep them under review.

Historic areas are now extensively recognised for the contribution they make to our cultural inheritance, economic well-being and quality of life. Public support for the conservation and enhancement of areas of architectural and historic interest is well established. By suggesting continuity and stability, such areas provide points of reference in a rapidly changing world: they represent the familiar and cherished local scene. Over 9000 have been designated nationally since they were introduced in 1967 and there are now 88 in South Somerset.

Local Authorities are required by the Act to review conservation areas from time to time and formulate and publish proposals for their preservation and enhancement. The preparation of character appraisals forms a part of this process, offering the opportunity to re-assess a designated area and to evaluate and record its special interest, particularly to help guide the way change and development takes place. An up to date appraisal will help guide development and regeneration in ways that will preserve the special character of the area. Appraisals are designed to provide guidance and support to parish councils, on decisions taken by the Council, its Development Management and Regeneration Services and to raise public awareness about the special character of the areas.

Designation is a matter for local (Area Committee) decision and is the principle means by which a local authority can apply conservation policies to a particular area.

Langport and Huish Episcopi Conservation Area appraisal and boundary review.

Langport & Huish Episcopi conservation area was first designated in 1971 and has not been reviewed since 1989.

Through the process of preparing the Appraisal some amendments to the boundary were felt to be necessary and additional areas have been identified as worthy of inclusion. The proposed alterations and extensions to the designated conservation area are shown on the attached map and have been consulted upon.

Consultations

Langport Town Council, Huish Episcopi Parish Council and Curry Rivel Parish Council were consulted on both the boundary proposals and the draft appraisal. Following their initial approval, a public consultation was carried out

1. By letter to all the properties that would be included in the conservation area for the first time.
2. By public notices displayed through the area.
3. By an exhibition of the proposals and draft appraisal in Langport Library with opportunities for feedback
4. Proposals and draft appraisal were available to view on the SSDC website.

As a result a small number of representations were received in addition to the comments of the Town and Parish Councils. Public concerns and comments on the boundary revisions included:

1. Two suggestions to remove the White Lion from the proposed extension, one of which raised concerns about the unsuitability of this site given the approved planning permission for redevelopment to the rear. Our response was that the frontage of the White Lion was felt to contribute positively to the character of North Street and should be included but it was agreed that the development site to the rear should not be excluded from the boundary extension.
2. A resident in Westover raised an objection about the proposed inclusion of the former railway line because the coppice planting here would be subject to conservation area tree controls. The former railway infrastructure is significant to the character and history of Westover and is considered appropriate to include in the conservation area so a resolution was agreed that a single tree notification at the appropriate time would cover coppice management to continue in perpetuity.
3. Both Langport and District History Society and Langport Town Council felt that the car park at St. Mary's Church, Huish should be retained within the conservation area and we have agreed this.
4. Observations from Somerset Industrial Archaeological Society and Langport and District History Society have been incorporated into the Conservation Area Appraisal.

Proposed boundary extensions

The principle extension proposed is at Westover, to include the historic weighbridge building, former railway hotel and other former industrial, wharfside and railway buildings and the railway bridge.

Various other minor additions are within North Street, to include the White Lion Hotel, The Beeches, Stable Cottage and the Grade II listed Evandale on the west side of North Street and within Huish Episcopi to include an area of land enclosed by stone walls between the Vicarage and Tanyard Lane and the Grade II listed Court Barton.

The attached map shows the existing boundary and proposed alterations.

Procedure

The boundary amendments are designated by a decision by this committee and it only remains to publicise the decision. The appraisal will be an advisory document that will form part of the Historic Environment Strategy that in turn forms part of the local plan and is required by the National Planning Policy Framework.

Financial Implications

The cost of statutory publicity in the local press and the London Gazette is expected to be approximately £200.

Council Plan Implications Priorities

Focus Two – Environment – “We want an attractive environment to live in with increased recycling and lower energy use”

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

No implications arising from this report.

Equality and Diversity Implications

None

Background Papers: None
