



Report for:	Cabinet
Date of meeting:	15 October 2019
Part:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	<b>Tring Conservation Area: Character Appraisal and Management Proposals</b>
Contact:	Councillor Graham Sutton, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration  Philip Stanley, Team Leader Specialist Services (Planning) Ext: 2579
Purpose of report:	To consider the adoption of the Tring Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals for use in Development Management and Strategic Planning.
Recommendations	That Cabinet recommends Council: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Adopt the Tring Conservation Area: Character Appraisal and Management Proposals as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Technical guidance for use in development management and to inform the Dacorum Borough Local Plan.</li> <li>b) A material planning consideration for use in the determination of planning applications.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2) Delegate authority to the Assistant Director, Planning, Development &amp; Regeneration to undertake all steps required for the completion of the 'Locally Listed Buildings' section of the Appraisal, to be attached as an Appendix. This includes the assessment, consultation and adoption of this Appendix.</li> </ul>
Corporate Objectives:	The Appraisal will make a significant contribution to the Council's overall vision by:  Creating a clean tidy and safe environment. Informing and consulting our communities and stakeholders on local issues.

	Promoting civic pride and an active community. Committing to excellence and best conservation practice.
Implications:  'Value for Money implications'  'Value For Money Implications'	<u>Value for Money</u>  The appraisal was produced by consultants BEAMS at a cost of £6,000 plus VAT. This represents excellent value for money in terms of thoroughness and attention to detail. The appraisal is intended to save officer time in the future in processing planning applications within the Tring Conservation Area, as well as in defending appeals against refused planning applications.
Risk Implications	The appraisal complies with legislation and best practice and the intention is therefore to avoid the risk of non-compliance and wasting resources.
Community Impact Assessment	A consultation exercise was carried out during March 2019. The results of this are summarised in the body of the report below and full details provided in Annex 1 and Annex 2. The proposal relates to the built form and is not felt to have any negative impact on any of the protected groups under the Equality Act.
Health And Safety Implications	N/A
Monitoring Officer/S.151 Officer Comments	<b>Monitoring Officer:</b>  No comments to add to the report.  <b>Deputy S.151 Officer</b> The implementation of the Tring conservation area and the support required to deliver the appraisal of this concept are to be funded from within approved budgets.
Consultees:	Residents within the proposed area including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Those whose properties would be included in the proposed extensions.</li> <li>• Visitors to the public exhibition at The Council Chamber, The Market House, 61 High St, Tring during the consultation period (a site notice was displayed on the High Street, advertising this exhibition).</li> </ul> National Historic Amenity Societies  Tring Town Council  Historic England  Chiltern Society

	Tring Historical Society
Background papers:	Tring Conservation Area: Character Appraisal & Management Proposals  Annex 1: Qualitative Account of Comments  Annex 2: Online survey responses – Summary document  Annex 3: New addresses in Conservation Area
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	CACA: Conservation Area Character Appraisal  NPPF: National Planning Policy Framework

## Background

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Providing a full assessment for all the Conservation Areas (25 in all) within Dacorum form part of the Council's Conservation Strategy. Conservation Area Appraisals have now been provided for Aldbury, Berkhamsted, Bovingdon, Chipperfield, Frithsden, Great Gaddesden, Hemel Hempstead (Old Town), and Nettleden.
- 1.2 The Strategy includes a programme for the review and production of Conservation Area Character Assessments for all 25 Conservation Areas.
- 1.3 The Conservation Area Appraisal (see Annex 1) highlights the special qualities and features that underpin Tring's character and justify its designation. Guidelines provided in the Management Proposals are designed to prevent harm and encourage enhancement. This type of assessment conforms to Historic England guidance and to Government advice in the NPPF. It also supports and amplifies those policies aimed at protecting the overall character of conservation areas and forming part of Dacorum Borough Council's Local Planning Framework.

### 2. Consultation Arrangements

- 2.1 The formal consultation process involved a combination of letters to addresses affected by the boundary change, letters to a variety of other interested parties (principally the Town Council and Historic bodies), a site notice, a public exhibition evening, messages on the Council's website, and an online survey.
- 2.2 The formal consultation period covered a four-week period from 5<sup>th</sup> March 2018 – 30<sup>th</sup> March 2018.
- The draft document could be viewed on Dacorum Borough Council's website, [www.dacorum.gov.uk](http://www.dacorum.gov.uk), and at the Council's offices at The Forum, Hemel Hempstead.
  - An exhibition was held in Tring Town Council, Council Chamber on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> of March 3pm-7pm, where details of the document

were displayed and Officers were present to answer any questions in relation to the draft Conservation Area Appraisal.

- A Public Notice was displayed on Tring High Street, informing of both the consultation period and the exhibition.

2.3 DBC carried out an online survey, which received 27 responses. Written/E-mail responses were also received from Tring Town Council, Historic England, the Tring Historical Society, the Chiltern Society, and a local resident.

### **3. Number and Nature of Responses Received**

3.1 Twenty-seven individuals and organisations submitted responses via the on-line survey. A further five individual written and e-mailed representations were received.

3.2 The qualitative representations and the Council's responses are set out in Annex 1. This includes a full list of these representations and a suggested response to the issues raised. It also includes recommended changes to the Character Appraisal and Management Proposals.

3.3 Annex 2 provides a quantitative analysis and Officer commentary of the responses received through the online survey.

#### General Comments

3.4 The vast majority of comments made were on specific points. However, where general comments were made, they were largely positive. A number of particularly helpful comments were provided in relation to proof reading of the documents, especially from Tring Town Council and the Tring Historical Society.

3.5 It is very pleasing to note that Historic England were complimentary in their response to the document:

*"We welcome this conservation area appraisal for Tring. It clearly and coherently sets out the historical development and special architectural interest of Tring, is well written in an engaging and articulate style, and is helpfully illustrated. In particular, the inclusion of a number of early historic maps and historical illustrations of Tring Park was helpful in providing a sense of the town's earlier development. The brief exploration of the architect William Huckvale, whose influence on the form of Tring was extensive, is also considered helpful, as is the diversion to discuss the presence of the Rothschild family, and both excursions from the narrative add depth to the analysis"*

3.6 Other positive endorsements of the document were received via the online survey:

*"The consultation document was very helpful and gave a good history of the metamorphosis of historic Tring".*

*"I thought the Appraisal Document was very informative and interesting".*

*“This document is largely encouraging and useful, and contains much of value. It also reads well”.*

3.7 One respondent appeared to question the need for the document due to the wider context of planning controls:

*“We feel that the proposed expansion of the Conservation Area aims to incorporate areas that are not generally accessible to the public and therefore have little impact on the overall character of the Town. While we fully support the sympathetic maintenance and restoration of some of the historical buildings, we believe that the current planning regulations, as they stand, provide sufficiently robust controls to ensure that such buildings retain their character and historical attributes while ensuring that any proposed development must take into account the historical significance of certain buildings”.*

3.8 One respondent had a negative view of the Appraisal and questioned the purpose of the document:

*“You have done nothing here to convince me this consultation is set up earnestly to preserve the area more likely, I believe it’s an attempt by some to develop the area”.*

However, the primary concern of this respondent was the protection of green spaces from developers.

#### Conservation Area Extensions

3.9 The Appraisal includes three extensions of the Tring Conservation Area

- Extension 1: Home Farm, White Cloud House, North Cottage and Thrift Cottage.
- Extension 2: Woodland Close
- Extension 3: Western Road and Cemetery

3.10 In general, there was strong support for these extensions. 20 out of 26 (77%) respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal for Extensions 1 and 3, whilst 18 out of 26 (69%) did so for Extension 2.

3.11 In terms of objections 4 respondents (15%), 3 (12%), and 2 (8%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the proposals to extend the Conservation Area at Home Farm, Woodland Close and Western Road respectively.

3.12 It is noted that Historic England did not make any comments in respect of the Home Farm and Woodland Close extensions. Where it did comment on the Western Road extension this was simply to question the distance of the cemetery to the town centre and therefore whether this area would be better suited by a stand-alone Conservation Area:

*“When considering whether to add to the area, regard should be had to the requirements of p.127 of the NPPF, which makes clear that local authorities should ensure that an area justifies being designated as a conservation area by virtue of its special architectural or historic interest, and that the concept*

*of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest. This should also be applied to boundary changes.*

*Whether an addition proposed might be better served and its particular special interest better and more coherently defined through being an independent conservation area is also an element to be considered, and we note that the proposed Tring cemetery extension is located some distance from the relatively compact and well defined town centre”.*

- 3.13 It is also worth noting that several answers were received, stating that the extensions did not go far enough and should also include the area of Tring Park and the fields and buildings located within the historic park to the south of the A41 with the following being a typical comment:

*“Surely the Conservation area should encompass the fields from Hastoe Lane to Home Farm with the rationale that these were all part of the Rothschild’s Tring Park domain”.*

#### Creation of two Character Areas

- 3.14 One of the most noticeable aspects of the Appraisal is to split the Tring Conservation Area into two character areas and it is important to note Historic England agreed with the document taking this approach:

*“We consider that the proposed division of the area into the two character areas is logical, and clearly reflects the urban form and grain of the area”.*

- 3.15 There was no equally no disagreement with this proposal within the online survey. 21 out of 26 respondents (81%) agreed or strongly agreed with the creation of Area A, whilst 19 out of 26 (73%) agreed or strongly agreed with the creation of Area B. The remaining respondents (for both Areas) neither agreed or disagreed.

- 3.16 Although there was no disagreement, some questioned the necessity of the division into two areas. Three respondents thought that it made no real difference and that it did not add to the process. The final point raised was should there be a third area which concentrated on the shopping core leaving the other two areas to cover the mainly residential streets.

#### Current situation in Conservation Area

- 3.17 The online survey asked about the current situation in the Conservation Area. 85% of respondents (22) strongly agreed or agreed that there is the right balance of uses within the Conservation Area, whilst 79% of respondents (19) strongly agreed or agreed that the buildings are generally in a good condition (with none disagreeing). 85% of respondents (22) stated that the Conservation Area felt safe. On the contrary only 8% of respondents (2) considered there was enough parking within the Conservation Area, whilst 50% of respondents (13) strongly agreed or agreed that new development has generally been successful in preserving the character of the conservation area.

- 3.18 The additional comments provided in response to this question all highlighted issues in relation to the lack of parking in particular in relation to the Tring Triangle/ Western Road area. Various respondents noted that this

is a consequence of the age of the area's building stock, the impact of the museum, the increasing size of vehicles, and the issue of pavement parking. Other comments noted, however, that the public car parks in Tring are largely adequate for the current number of visitors and that new development, such as in Langdon Street, have been built with sufficient parking.

3.19 Two respondents commented on some unfortunate shopfronts in the Conservation Area, for example:

*"Some of the shop fronts on High Street East don't fit in well. I think the guidelines should be tightened up so that changes are in keeping with the original building"*.

3.20 In respect of shopfronts Historic England suggested in their comments that:

*"With regard to shop fronts on p.50, it would be useful to illustrate good and bad examples with photographs, to aid clarity, and help decision-making"*.

#### Character details within the Conservation Area

3.21 All of the character details were seen as fairly or very important by at least 65% of the respondents. The details that scored highest were 'Traditional shop fronts', 'The continued use of matching materials for extensions', and 'The Trees'. 100% of respondents said that these details were important or very important.

3.22 The areas of disagreement were low for all the character details. The elements considered to be 'Not very important' or 'Not very important at all' by the most respondents were 'The rear elevations of historic buildings' and 'The absence of roof lights to front elevation roof pitches' (both 35%).

3.23 When asked whether there were any other details that the respondent considered important to the Conservation Area the responses were varied. However, they generally fell into categories of highway works in particular traditional street signs, lighting and clutter in general. Complaints were also made about the noise from the A41. The other broad area of response was the green spaces both within and outwith the conservation area, preservation of these spaces and access to them.

3.24 In terms of improving the Conservation Area there was a general desire to improve the public realm. In particular, the pavements, road surfaces and as noted previously the management of parking and car movements through the town centre. Associated with this was a desire to reduce street clutter and signage where possible. A second major concern was the quality of shopfronts within the town and improvements that could be made to them. Further points raised were to ensure that appropriate materials were used for new buildings and that some problem buildings most notably the scaffolding on the modern block of the natural history museum be removed.

## **4. Summary of Proposed Changes resulting from the Consultation**

4.1 The proposed changes to the Appraisal that was published for consultation include minor corrections and updating to the text, assessment of areas

suggested as further extensions to the Conservation Area, amendment to the maps, and updating photographs.

4.2 The following is a summary of the changes that have been made:

- A number of amendments have been made in line with the consultation responses – specifically from Tring Town Council and the Tring Historical Society (mainly minor discrepancies / spelling mistakes / updating of building names, etc.).
- A number of changes but not all have been made in relation to the Historic England consultation response – see below for further information.
- A number of photographs have been updated and a couple more added.
- Character area maps now exclude Locally Listed Buildings as the suggested Local List was not completed, references to ‘locally listed’ buildings have been removed from the text.
- Section 3.6 (public realm) has been amended, it is more positive in tone in relation to Church Square and includes reference to the improvement works that have been undertaken in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- Regarding boundary changes: The text for proposed Area 3 (Cemetery / Western Road villas) has been expanded upon. The reason for not including Tring Park in the CA now includes a sentence stating this area is a Grade II listed Registered Park and Garden.
- Minor spell checking was also altered e.g. aerals.

4.3 A number of changes were made to the document in respect of Historic England comments:

- A ‘summary of special interest’ has been placed at front of CACA.
- Required proofreading done and corrections made.
- Section and paragraph numbers have been added.
- Where the appraisal and management plan refers to “Scheduled Ancient Monument”, the contracted term “Scheduled Monument” is used instead.
- The maps have been enlarged where possible.
- The section where Harrow Yard is discussed on p.47 has been amended to deal with the inconsistency highlighted.
- References to Conservation Area Consent have been updated so that Planning Permission is now referred to.
- The web address for Historic England’s Heritage at Risk Register has been updated.

4.4 The document has also been altered to take into account some of the specific comments the Conservation Department received.

- 4.5 The revised CACA provides more understanding of the history of Tring, e.g. land given by 1<sup>st</sup> Lord Rothschild in Frogmore Street as public open space; Converted Chapel in Chapel Street was not Methodist but Ebenezer.
- 4.6 The land between the Home Farm site and Tring Park were again reconsidered by officers in light of the requests. However, it was felt that as part of this space is designated as a park and garden it had a reasonable level of protection. In addition, the conservation area legislation is designed to protect buildings rather than large areas of open space. However, it is acknowledged that the land forms the setting to the conservation area and as such has a level of protection from this.
- 4.7 Conservation Officers disagreed that Sutton Court was a negative building as it won an award at time of its construction. The CACA has been revised to state that the design of building was reasonable, but issue was its context.
- 4.8 The design of Church Square required further comment. It was felt to be an improvement on the previous situation. Church Square was reconsidered and the document was revised to address the issues raised and emphasis the improvements to the area and the positive outcomes of the works.

## **5. Next Steps**

- 5.1 Officers recommend the adoption of the draft Tring Character Appraisal & Management Proposals (published for consultation) incorporating the amendments and reviews referred to above.
- 5.2 The adopted Appraisal & Management Proposals will prove additional guidance to the Local Plan, and thus become an important material consideration in all relevant planning applications. The weight attached to the Character Appraisal is greater because of the consultation carried out and the comments received. It is now important for the revised Appraisal & Management Proposals to be published as soon as possible, together with a statement of the public consultation.
- 5.3 In respect of the work required to establish a Tring list of Locally Listed Buildings the following course of action will be taken:
- The conservation department will meet with relevant interested individuals to discuss the local listing of buildings within the Tring Conservation Area.
  - A working party and timetable for the programme will be agreed.
  - The local listings will follow the criteria set out in the local listing guidance and previously used for Berkhamsted.
  - A list of potential buildings for local listing will be drawn up.
  - The conservation department will assess the list to ensure that the criteria are met.
  - The local listing will follow the process set out in the Conservation Strategy.