



Report for:	Cabinet
Title of report:	Little Gaddesden Conservation Area: Character Appraisal
Date:	15 March 2022
Report on behalf of:	Councillor Anderson - Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure
Part:	I
If Part II, reason:	N/A
Appendices:	Annex 1: Little Gaddesden Conservation Appraisal Annex 2: Qualitative Account of Comments and Online survey responses – Summary document Annex 3: New addresses in Conservation Area
Background papers:	
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	CACA - Conservation Area Character Appraisal. Lidar - laser imaging, detection and ranging.

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Corporate Priorities	A clean, safe and enjoyable environment The appraisal highlights the important character of the conservation area in particular in relation to design and layout which will inform any new development to ensure that the environment is protected or enhanced.
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	<p>Building strong and vibrant communities Joint working with the parish council to produce the document has ensured community support for the proposal which in part seeks to protect the vitality of the village.</p> <p>Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery Provides a clear framework upon which planning decisions can be made.</p>
Wards affected	Ashridge
Purpose of the report:	To consider the adoption of the Little Gaddesden Conservation Area Character Appraisal for use in Development Management and Strategic Planning and associated boundary amendments
Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That Cabinet approves the Little Gaddesden Conservation Area: Character Appraisal. 2. That Cabinet delegates authority to the Strategic Director (Place) to make any final minor editorial and typographical revisions to the document, including any necessary to reflect the Cabinet's discussions and decision.
Period for post policy/project review:	N/a

1 Introduction/Background:

- 1.1 The provision of a full assessment for all the Conservation Areas within Dacorum forms part of the Council's Conservation Strategy.
- 1.2 The Strategy includes a programme for the review and production of Conservation Area Character Assessments for all 25 Conservation Areas. Conservation Area Appraisals have now been provided for Aldbury, Berkhamsted, Bovingdon, Chipperfield, Frithsden, Great Gaddesden, Hemel Hempstead (Old Town), Nettleden and Tring.
- 1.3 The Conservation Area Appraisal, (see Annex 1), highlights the special qualities and features that underpin Little Gaddesden's character and justify its designation. 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 forms part of Dacorum Borough Council's Local Planning Framework.

2 Key Issues/proposals/main body of the report:

- 2.1 Officers recommend the adoption of the draft Little Gaddesden Character Appraisal (published for consultation) incorporating the amendments and reviews referred to below. The adopted Appraisal will provide additional guidance to the Local Plan, and will therefore 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 to be published as soon as possible, together with a statement of the public consultation.
- 2.2 The boundary of the conservation area should be amended as noted in the appraisal document having taken into account views from the consultation.

3 Options and alternatives considered

Do nothing - It is necessary to review the boundaries and produce appraisals in line with national requirements and policy guidance. This is a legal requirement under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

4 Consultation

- 4.1 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 Parish Council and Historic bodies), site notices, public exhibition afternoon/evenings, messages on the Council's website, and an online survey.
- 4.2 The formal consultation period covered a five-week period from 11th November 2021 to 17th December 2021.
 - The draft document could be viewed on Dacorum Borough Council's website, www.dacorum.gov.uk.
 - An exhibition was held in Little Gaddesden Village Hall on Friday 19th of November between 4pm-7pm, where details of the document were displayed and Officers were present to answer any questions in relation to the draft Conservation Area Appraisal. The exhibition was also held on Saturday the 20th November with Parish Council representatives present.
 - Public Notices were displayed on Notice Boards in the village, providing information on both the consultation period and the exhibition.

- The Council conducted an online survey, which received sixteen responses.
- Written/E-mail responses were also received from Historic England, and local residents.

Number and Nature of Responses Received

- 4.3 Sixteen individuals and organisations submitted responses via the on-line survey. A further twenty individual written representations were received at the event.
- 4.4 The qualitative representations and the Council's responses are set out in Annex 2. 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. In addition, the Annex provides a quantitative analysis and Officer commentary of the responses received through the online survey.

General Comments

- 4.5 The vast majority of comments were supportive and 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.

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

"Overall it's an exceptionally detailed and comprehensive appraisal considering it's been produced by the community (with some help I note). It contains a lot of information, high quality photographs, and clear maps. In its present form I'd say it would certainly help provide an informative evidence base for plan making and decision taking"

- 4.7 Other positive endorsements of the document were received:

"Firstly I'd like to say that it is an extremely thorough, well-researched and well-written document which will be a great tool for designers. Congratulations all round!"

"A really good piece of work and I would love to buy a copy of the report if possible please".

"Wonderful body of work. Well done to everyone concerned. Please do continue with the Proposals".

- 4.8 In relation to negative comments, none of those received questioned the document or proposals but one respondent questioned the direction of the document due to the wider concerns about the impact on costs for projects

Conservation Area Extensions

- 4.9 The Appraisal includes an extension of the Little Gaddesden Conservation Area

- Extension 1: Adjacent to the Church/ Farm to include the site of the medieval village.

- 4.10 In general, there was strong support for the extension with none of the resident responses objecting to the extension. Furthermore, there was a significant questioning of the need to extend with various options suggested. These ranged from very substantial to include all land to Hudnall Lane to smaller extensions suggesting that the land from the church to the football field be included. It was mentioned by 9 out of 20 written responses at the public event and 6 out of 9 responses to the on-line question related to the extension topic.

- 4.11 It is noted that Historic England disagreed with the extension apart from the area to include Church Farm on the basis that the designation will make no difference to the planning

consent regime in these locations unless the LPA is considering withdrawing agricultural PD rights by Article 4 Direction.

- 4.12 The officers have considered this and have reflected on these views. It is considered that the Council should proceed with some of the proposed extensions around the church and church farm. The area includes the site of the medieval village which can be seen on the lidar images and historic mapping. This helps understand the history and development of the village and character of the settlement. As such, the recommendation is that it should be included. There is also substantial local support for the extension and it is considered that the understanding and character of the area is somewhat influenced by its setting.
- 4.13 Having reviewed proposals, the particular importance of the open land leading up to the isolated church is a key aspect to this part of the conservation area and should be protected. It is noted that there are many other conservation areas in England which include areas of landscape surrounding them. Furthermore, others, such as canal conservation areas, are featureless for large sections. Therefore, whilst it is agreed that there needs to be a closely drawn boundary, it also needs to reflect the character of the area proposed for protection which will, in some cases, include landscape as well as buildings as in this case. However, to ensure a reasonably tight boundary it has been decided not to follow the suggestions from members of the public at the open day and on-line comments suggesting various extensions south from the current boundary towards Hudnall Lane. This area has the character of open farmland and, whilst used by the former inhabitants for farming, it has no greater historic interest unlike the proposed extension to the north. The area to the north is to be reduced to the site around the church which appears to be the main location of the medieval village and not the ridge and furrow farming pattern which follows the footpath.

Current situation in Conservation Area

- 4.14 Other issues that were raised in relation to the character of the conservation area included light pollution from security lights although another respondent was in favour of security lights. One comment raised concerns on car parking pressures at the weekends and also speed limits needing to be lowered in the village.
- 4.15 All of the character details were seen as fairly or very important by the respondents. 'The continued use of matching materials for extensions', and 'The Trees' were considered to be important or very important by the respondents.
- 4.16 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' and lack of satellite dishes.
- 4.17 When asked whether there were any other details considered important to the Conservation Area, the responses were varied but no key themes or points emerged from these. The highest level of response was two similar answers on security lighting concerns.

Summary of Proposed Changes resulting from the Consultation

- 4.18 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 the updating of photographs.
- 4.19 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 (mainly minor discrepancies / spelling mistakes / updating of building names, etc.).
 - A number of photographs have been updated and a couple more added.
 - Regarding boundary changes: The text for the proposed changes has been expanded upon with reasons given, in particular, in relation to the area of Church Road.

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

- Views and vistas noted within the document
- Review of Numbering

4.20 The document has also been altered to take into account some of the specific comments the Conservation Department received, in particular, the boundary of the conservation area at Manor Yard at the Manor House, where it has been necessary to amend the conservation area boundary to ensure that all the walls are included within the area and better reflect the situation as it is on the ground.

5 Financial and value for money implications:

The appraisal was produced through joint working with Little Gaddesden Parish Council and Dacorum Borough Council Conservation and Design Department. The Parish Council did the work on a voluntary basis which saved a substantial amount of officer time and allowed it to be completed in a short time period. This was very welcome and allowed the appraisal to be completed a great deal faster than it would otherwise due to pressures on the design and conservation dept. 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 Little Gaddesden Conservation Area, as well as in defending appeals against refused planning applications.

6 Legal Implications

None

7 Risk implications:

Not adopting the appraisal would weaken the local authority position in relation to preserving or enhancing the conservation area.

8 Equalities, Community Impact and Human Rights:

The document was produced with the local community. A consultation exercise was carried out in November 2021 including a public event at the village hall on Friday 19th and Saturday 20th November. The results of this are summarised in the body of the report and full details are provided in Annex 2 and Annex 3. 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.

There are no Human Rights Implications arising from this report.

9 Sustainability implications (including climate change, health and wellbeing, community safety)

The proposal will help to protect the high-quality environment of the Little Gaddesden Conservation Area ensuring that it remains a pleasant place in which to live.

10 Council infrastructure (including Health and Safety, HR/OD, assets and other resources)

N/A

11 Statutory Comments

Deputy Monitoring Officer:

Pursuant to section 69(2) of the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990 the Council is required to carry out reviews 'from time to time' to determine whether any parts or further parts of its area should be designated as conservation areas, and if it so determines, that part (s) shall be

designated as such. Although there is no statutory requirement for consultation, it is considered appropriate that the proposal to designate an area with Conservation Area status is subject to public consultation given the effect that such designation may have on future development proposals within the designated area.

Deputy S151 Officer:

No further comments to add.

12 Conclusions:

The appraisal document which has been the Council's first co-produced appraisal with a Parish Council and was supported by local residents at consultation stage. This appraisal will help officers, agents and members of the local community to preserve and enhance the character of the Little Gaddesden Conservation Area. It is, therefore, recommended that it be adopted in full.