



Portfolio Holder Decision  
Making Session and date/time

18<sup>th</sup> September 2013

9 am

Item

**3**

Public

## **Proposed Extension of Church Stretton Conservation Area**

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### **1. Summary**

This report outlines the proposal for an extension to the Church Stretton Conservation Area. A survey and appraisal was undertaken in 2009 recommending a number of areas of extension, a copy of the appraisal can be seen at Appendix A. Subsequently these proposed extension areas have been subject to a 90 day public consultation process between January and April 2013, a summary of responses can be seen at Appendix B.

This report provides a summary of the consultation process and outcomes and the next steps for the proposed Conservation Area extension.

### **2. Recommendations**

The Portfolio Holder is asked to:

1. Approve the proposed Conservation Area extension

Reasons for decision:

The proposed extension to the Church Stretton Conservation Area was instigated based on input and feedback from local residents and Church Stretton Town Council.

## **REPORT**

### **3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal**

Designation of the proposed extensions to the Conservation Area would give additional planning protection from unsympathetic development which might otherwise spoil the area's special character, including the safeguarding of important trees and open spaces.

Non designation of the proposed areas would have significantly less impact on current workloads of Planning, Enforcement, Conservation and Natural Environment Officers.

The formal public consultation period ran from 25<sup>th</sup> January , 2013 to 19<sup>th</sup> April 2013. A summary of the comments received are attached as Appendix B. The consultation programme was

developed to ensure the inclusion of as many people as possible, using a variety different methods of consultation and response methods.

#### 4. Financial Implications

	<b>Costs</b>		<b>Income / Savings</b>	
	<b>Revenue</b>	<b>Capital</b>	<b>Revenue</b>	<b>Capital</b>
<b>First financial year</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Full financial year</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>One-off</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>On-going annual</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Please provide a summary of how costs and income/savings values are calculated.</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Please provide a summary of how the net costs will be funded.</b>	0	0	0	0

The proposed Conservation Area extension has no financial implications as such, all additional work load produced as a result of the extension would have to be accommodated within current working practices and current budgets.

There will be a minimal fee for the cost of advertising the completion of the designation process in the local newspaper and the London Gazette as required by legislation.

#### 5. Background

##### Background on Conservation Areas

1. The concept of conserving the character of entire areas was first introduced in the Civic Amenities Act of 1967. These provisions were consolidated into the 1971 Town and Country Planning Act, subsequently the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
2. Conservation Area legislation emphasises the importance of the character of an area as a key consideration when decisions are made in respect of development proposals. A Conservation Area is defined as ‘an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’. Conservation is a more dynamic approach which allows change, but change that is controlled so as to retain the inherent quality of a place.
3. Consequences of conservation area status should be noted:
  - Outline planning applications are not normally entertained. This is because it is not possible to “pay special attention” to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area without seeing the details of what is proposed.
  - It is an offence to demolish buildings or structures in conservation areas without “conservation area consent”.

- It is an offence to cut down, top, lop, uproot, wilfully damage or destroy a tree in a conservation area without having given 6 weeks' notice to the Local Planning Authority. During this period, the LPA may consider whether to make a Tree Preservation Order.
  - Permitted Development rights are more limited than elsewhere.
  - Rights to display advertisements are more limited than elsewhere.
4. The Council has a duty to review from time to time areas of special historic or architectural interest for designation. At the present time there are 120 Conservation Areas designated within the County, the most recent being The Pant Glas and Brogyntyn Park Conservation Area north of Oswestry which was designated in July 2010.

### **Background on Current Proposal**

5. The small town of Church Stretton lies about 12 miles south of the county town of Shrewsbury and within a narrow valley, half a mile wide, between the Stretton Hills to the east and the Longmynd to the west. The scale of the surrounding hills gives the town a strategic and picturesque position at the low pass between the North Shropshire Plain and Apedale and the Teme Valley. The whole town, with the surrounding hills and lower landscapes lies within the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Beauty which was designated in 1959.
6. The parish extends to 3,133 ha most of which lies to the south and west of the town. The topography is dramatic in which the narrow valley in which the town sits overshadowed by the broad mass of the Longmynd to the west and the craggy outline of the Stretton Hills to the east.
7. In the town, the predominant land use is residential (and at relatively low average densities) with retail and other employment uses making up most of the remainder.
8. In Old English the name Stretton (*stræt-tun*) means “settlement on the Roman Road” and is common in central England, with about a dozen occurrences. The earliest documented source for the name Stretton is in 1086 (*Stratun*)<sup>20</sup>. We do not know when the name was first used, but it clearly pre-dates the Domesday Survey, as the settlement is recorded in the Domesday survey as having substantial value before 1066. The first part of the name derives from the fact that it provided the church for a large parish with a number of outlying settlements. The first documentary evidence for this usage is from 1261, but other usages of the *Stretton in Stretton(s)dale* between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, meant that the form *Church Stretton* did not become standard until relatively recently.
9. Church Stretton has three main components to its character. The first is the nuclear settlement in High Street and Church Street. The second is the late Victorian and Edwardian development that gives it so much of its character today. The third is the post-war developments. Some of these have been carefully integrated into the existing urban fabric but most is in the form of housing estates of varying types and sizes. Within this fabric lie a wealth of interesting spaces, some public and some private, which add up to a townscape of some character. The original settlement is still identifiable from its function as a market town and as a stopping place on the road from Chester to Bristol. The importance of the route was reinforced between 1472 and 1689 when Ludlow was the seat of the Council of the Marches and was thus a focal point for communication with all parts of Wales. The pattern of the buildings today still has echoes of the mediaeval burgh plots.
10. The Normans clearly regarded Church Stretton as an important strategic site. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century a new church was built (the nave of which survives today), a castle (Brocards or Brockhurst Castle) was built on the natural mound to the south of the town and, probably,

the burgage plots of the town were laid out. By the early 13<sup>th</sup> century the town had a market charter and the church had been enlarged in the Early English style. But by mid-century the strategic significance of the town had declined and the castle had been abandoned.

11. It was the existence of the railway that made the late Victorian and Edwardian development possible. At the time there was a market for substantial properties for well-heeled residents who could afford to travel to work, or not to work at all, emulating other inland resorts. The subdivision of land on the eastern and western hillsides was carried out (with a faint echo of burgage plots) and those who could afford to build substantial properties expensively on steeply sloping sites were rewarded with the stunning views across the valley that epitomises these areas today.
12. Church Stretton appears to have had a largely uneventful history. The town was razed by a fire in 1593 which means little survival of fabric from before that date. The coming of the railway in 1852, led to the idea that the town might be developed as a resort or even a spa. The Hotel in High Street was built in 1865 and the Hydro33 in 1902. It was only in 1898-99 with the establishment of land and development companies, that the new developments progressed at any speed. The first 10 years of 20<sup>th</sup> century were the heyday of Church Stretton, with large amounts of development taking place. But after the First World War, demand dropped, not to be fully revived until the 1970s.
13. Only a small percentage of the buildings in the Conservation Area are of a notable quality. The rest are of little individual architectural or historic consequence but many contribute to the special character of the Conservation Area through their distribution, massing and variety. The town contains 32 listed buildings including the 12<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century Church of St Laurence.
14. Church Stretton Conservation Area was originally designated in 1986 and its boundary was drawn tightly around the historic core of the town. In 2007 the Parish decided to prepare a Village Design Statement for the parish. This statement was a useful background document in the preparation of an Appraisal which was undertaken by Caird Consultants in 2009 following guidelines by English Heritage and in consultation with representatives of Church Stretton Parish Council, the Strettondale Area Partnership, the Strettons Civic Society, the Church Stretton Town Design Statement Committee, the Church Stretton Chamber of Trade and the National Trust.. It recommends 5 extensions to the existing boundaries and a number of management proposals to enhance the character and appearance of the area.

## **6. Additional Information**

### **Public Consultation**

14. The consultation took place over a period of 3 months between January and April 2013. During this time a number of consultation methods were employed to gain as wide a response as possible, including:
  - Over 500 households received written notification of proposed extension
  - Over 70 people attended a drop in session
  - The proposals were advertised via the Shropshire Council website
  - Over 54 local groups were informed of the proposals by email
  - The proposals were advertised in the local Town Council newsletter
15. Responses from local residents on the draft proposals were sought, residents could respond by phone, email or letter or in person at the drop in session or at any Shropshire Council customer service point.

16. Out of the 553 residents who would be affected by the proposals only 50 formal responses were received on the draft boundary a 9% response rate. The comments received were:
  - 3.6% of consultees gave negative responses to the proposal
  - 2.7% of consultees gave positive responses in support of the proposal
  - 2.7% of consultees gave neutral feedback about the proposal
17. The results of the public consultation exercise showed that there was no strong local support or objection for the proposed extension.
18. A small number 18% of the total responses requested adjustments to the draft proposed boundary. Following the consultation a further desk and site based assessments of the proposed extension areas was undertaken, specifically assessing the merits of each individual case put forward by respondents. As a result the boundary has been altered slightly to accommodate a number of these changes, these amendments can be clearly seen in Appendix C. However it is considered that these changes are relatively minor in comparison to the whole proposed extension and concerns predominantly only individual houses, therefore it was determined that further public consultation would not be required. The individual households that are no longer included in the extension boundary have been notified of the change.

## 7. Conclusions

19. A number of factors give rise to the special interest of Church Stretton Conservation Area. These are:
  - It is a settlement with a long history of market and travel-related functions with a large planned expansion in the Edwardian period.
  - The pattern of development broadly follows the patterns set by the ancient roads and the historic layout of residential and business curtilages and as overlain by the interventions of Edwardian and later developments.
  - The discreet siting of the original settlement is greatly contrasted with the prominence of the Edwardian developments which were specifically designed to exploit the dramatic landscape possibilities of the topography.
  - It has an architectural heritage spanning 10 centuries with two major periods of activity – c1595-c1640 following a 'great fire' and 1865-1914 when the town was developed as a residential resort.
  - It has buildings and spaces which give it a unique character.
  - Its low density of development provides some street spaces of a rural aspect very close to the centre of the town.
  - It has tree cover of extraordinary quality and extent.
20. Church Stretton is a settlement of significant historical and architectural character. While the settlement has a number of individually listed structures, these are brought together and their significance enhanced by the quality of the local environment overall. The settlement possesses a discernible sense of local distinctiveness and as such the proposed extensions are a suitable candidate for designation as a Conservation Area which is supported by a range of local residents.
21. The extension to the Conservation Area acknowledged the special significance of Church Stretton and assists in protecting the area's distinct character while permitting appropriate new development which maintains or enhances the area's special character. It also

provides for greater opportunity to engage with the local community in managing the historic environment that they value.

22. It should be noted that should the Council recommend designation of the extensions there would be a significant increase in workload for many Officers, with regards to Planning Applications and works to trees.
23. Should the Council recommend this endorsement a Notice of Designation would be drafted and advertised as statutorily required.

**List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)**

See Appendices below.

**Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)**

Cllr Malcolm Price

**Local Member**

Cllr Lee Chapman

Cllr David Evans

**Appendices**

Appendix A – Conservation Area Appraisal completed in 2009 with updates in 2013

Appendix B – Public consultation letter and summary responses

Appendix C – Map highlighting boundary changes

**Declaration of Interest**

- I have no interest to declare in respect of this report

Signed ..... Date .....

NAME: ...Mal Price.....

PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR: Planning, Housing and Commissioning (Central)

- I have to declare an interest in respect of this report

Signed ..... Date .....

NAME: .....

PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR: .....

(Note: If you have an interest you should seek advice as to whether it is appropriate to make a decision in relation to this matter.)

For the reasons set out in the report, I agree the recommendation(s) in the report entitled .....

**Proposed Extension of Church Stretton Conservation Area**

Signed .....

Portfolio Holder for **Planning, Housing and Commissioning (Central)**

Date .....

If you have any additional comment which you would want actioned in connection with your decision you should discuss this with the report author and then set out your comment below before the report and pro-forma is returned to Democratic Services for processing.

Additional comment : .....

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Note: If you do not wish to approve the recommendations, or wish to make an alternative decision, it is important that you consult the report author, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Chief Executive and the Head of Finance, Governance and Assurance (S151 Officer) and, if there are staffing implications the Head of Human Resources (or their representatives) so that (1) you can be made aware of any further relevant considerations that you should take into account before making the decision and (2) your reasons for the decision can be properly identified and recorded, as required by law.

Note to Portfolio Holder: Your decision will now be published and communicated to all Members of Council. If the decision falls within the criteria for call-in, it will not be implemented until five working days have elapsed from publication.