Executive Report
Ward(s) affected: Tillingbourne and Lovelace
Report of Director of Planning and Regeneration
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Conservation Area Appraisals for Holmbury St Mary and Ripley Conservation Areas

Executive Summary

A conservation area appraisal is a document that describes the special interest of a conservation area. This report recommends that the Executive adopts the draft conservation area appraisal for Holmbury St Mary, the draft conservation area appraisal for Ripley and approve a minor boundary change for the Ripley conservation area.

The report explains the purpose of an appraisal document and discusses the consultation process that the documents have been through.

Recommendation to Executive:

(1) That, subject to the proposed minor boundary change described in this report, the Ripley Conservation Area Appraisal set out in Appendix 3 be adopted.

(2) That the Holmbury St Mary Conservation Area Appraisal set out in Appendix 4 be adopted.

Reason for Recommendation:
To enable the conservation area appraisals to become material considerations in future planning decisions affecting those areas.

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to ask the Executive to adopt the draft conservation area appraisals for Holmbury St Mary and for Ripley and to approve a minor boundary alteration for the Ripley Conservation Area.

2. Strategic Priorities

2.1 The production of appraisals for our conservation areas will help the Council meet its strategic priorities. An appraisal document describes the special interest
of a conservation area and discusses the characteristics and features of the area, which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.

2.2 Once adopted, the documents will become a material consideration in the planning process and will help to ensure that officers have the right tools in order to manage growth in a sustainable way for future generations.

3. **Background**

3.1 A conservation area is an area of special architectural and/or historic character the character of which it is desirable to preserve and enhance.

3.2 The purpose of a conservation area character appraisal is to clearly identify what it is about the character of an area that should be preserved or enhanced and to define an area's special interest. The documents can be used by developers when formulating plans in conservation areas, homeowners when planning alterations to their properties and development management when assessing applications in a conservation area.

3.3 The aim of a conservation area character appraisal is to:

- Improve the understanding of the history and the historical context of the area
- Generate awareness of exactly what it is about the conservation area that makes it of special interest
- Provide residents and owners with a clear idea of what it is about the conservation area that should be cared for and preserved
- Provide the Council with a valuable tool with which to inform its planning practice and policies for the area
- Provide residents and owners with a clear idea of what improvements could be made to the conservation area

3.4 Paragraph 127 of the National Planning Policy Framework asks local authorities to ensure that an area justifies designation as a conservation area so that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of special interest. Conservation area appraisals are a clear way to ensure that the reasons for conservation area designation are clear and available to everyone.

**Ripley Conservation Area Appraisal**

3.5 Ripley is an historic Surrey village located six miles to the north east of Guildford. The settlement developed along two historic routes; the north east to south west route along the Portsmouth Road was by far the most significant to the way the settlement developed and was a medieval route from Kingston to Guildford which eventually became the historic main route between Portsmouth and London. The linear development along this historic route is an important part of the history of the area.

3.6 The conservation area was originally designated on 29 February 1972 by Surrey County Council. The current boundary encompasses almost all of the historic village and part of Ripley Green, as well as some of the fields, woodlands and school playing fields that surround the village. There is currently no conservation area appraisal for the area.
3.7 An appraisal for Ripley Conservation Area was first drafted in 2012 with the help of Ripley Parish Council, local Borough Councillors and the local historians from the Send and Ripley History Society. Unfortunately, this was not progressed at the time but officers have used this work to form the basis of the 2017 draft appraisal that we are now recommending for adoption.

3.8 A review of the existing boundary was carried out on 30 November 2012, which observed a notable exclusion to the original conservation area as the complex of historic buildings to the north side of Ripley Green around Dunsborough House. We are now proposing this area for inclusion.

3.9 The conservation area appraisal (Appendix 3) includes a brief history of the area but concentrates on what is special about the area; what we should be conserving and what its special features are.

**Holmbury St Mary Conservation Area Appraisal**

3.10 Holmbury St Mary was designated a conservation area in January 1990 by Guildford Borough Council. The conservation area is formed around a small village south-east of Guildford, the special character of which has been shaped and defined by the surviving post-medieval farming hamlet together with Victorian development centred around the grade I listed church of St Mary the Virgin by famous Arts and Crafts architect George Edmund Street. Its unusual character derives partly from its woodland setting, where historic houses are nestled among forested hills. The area is also recognised by other special landscape designations and lies in an area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

3.11 The draft conservation area appraisal for Holmbury St Mary (Appendix 4) discusses the importance the setting of the area has to its special interest as well looking at brief history of the area before detailing the area’s special architectural and historic interest.

3.12 The document splits the village into character areas and goes into some detail describing each area and ending the section with a summary of its special features. The appraisal contains numerous photographs illustrating the local distinctiveness of the area.

4. **Consultations**

4.1 The Lead Councillor for Planning and Regeneration approved the documents for public consultation that was held between 6 March and 2 April 2017. The public response was minimal with only one response concerning the Holmbury St Mary appraisal and no comments from members of the public on the Ripley appraisal. All responses have been summarised alongside the officer response in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

4.2 The relevant ward councillors were made aware of the consultation; we did not receive any comments from them on the draft documents.
4.3 Officers attended a meeting with Ripley Parish Council on 3 April to discuss the draft document; following the meeting, the Parish Council submitted a number of comments and suggested corrections.

4.4 Corrections have been made to the document as a result of the Parish Council's comments, these are detailed in Appendix 1.

4.5 As part of the consultation, officers proposed the removal of a small area of the original conservation area at the entrance to the historic village on the western approach. Officers believed this area to include buildings with less of an historic relationship with the historic core of the village. The area includes the restaurant and village hall to the north side of High Street, and on the south side of High Street a group of residential properties including an interesting group of 19th century houses at an angle to the street, as well as some 20th century modern infill housing of traditional design close to the church.

4.6 The Parish Council's response was against this proposed amendment; they consider that the area is an important entrance to the village and that the village hall has an important relationship with the historic village centre and should remain within the conservation area. They also point out that some of the homes officers proposed to exclude from the conservation area were built post World War 1 for returning service men and therefore are an important part of the early twentieth century history of the area.

4.7 Officers have considered this representation and have concluded it appropriate to retain these within the Conservation Area boundary.

4.8 A request from the parish council to extend the conservation area further north beyond Dunsborough House was also considered by officers.

4.9 The 1869 -1901 historic mapping shows land to the north of Dunsborough House to be open. The houses identified for inclusion by the parish council, including the cottage pair originally known as Dunsborough Cottages close to the river footbridge do not appear on the historic mapping until 1922 – 1969. Whilst the last pair of cottages retain some attractive detailing, the group north of Dunsborough house also includes a few modern buildings of no particular merit.

4.10 Officers consider that the conservation area boundary should be drawn closely to and concentrate on the historic core of the village and those buildings (and which may also include associated land) which are intrinsic to its historic development.

4.11 Officers do not consider that the houses north of Dunsborough House have a significant historic relationship to the original core of the village, nor do they have special architectural merit such that they are considered worthy of inclusion. For these reasons, officers consider the proposed boundary to the north is appropriate as drafted and recommend approval without further change.

4.12 The amended map is part of the draft conservation area appraisal at Appendix 3.
4.13 A second meeting was held with representatives of Ripley Parish Council on 10 May 2017 where they were happy to accept the officers’ recommendations on the boundary changes and would support the minor boundary change to include Dunsborough House.

Shere Parish Council (covers Holmbury St Mary)

4.14 Officers attended a meeting with Shere Parish Council on 6 April 2017 to discuss the draft document. Following the meeting, the Parish Council submitted a number of corrections, concerns and suggestions, which are set out at Appendix 2 together with officers’ responses.

4.15 Corrections and amendments have been made to the document as a result of the Parish Council’s comments, and a subsequent meeting was held with the parish on 23 May 2017 where these were discussed.

4.16 Whilst the representatives from the Parish Council felt that the document was a bit light on historic development of the area, they understood, following the second meeting, the purpose of the document was not as an academic piece of work documenting all of the history of Holmbury St Mary, but as a tool to be used in the planning process.

5. Equality and Diversity Implications

5.1 No implications apply.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 There are no financial implications to the Council from the adoption of these conservation area appraisals.

7. Legal Implications

7.1 The Council has a duty under section 69 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to designate conservation areas within its locality and to review them from time to time. This can result in:

- new areas being designated;
- boundaries of existing conservation areas being extended or reduced; or
- cancellation of the designation if the original special interest of a conservation area has been significantly eroded

7.2 Although there is no requirement for the review to take place at particular intervals, guidance produced by Historic England, “Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management Historic England Advice Note 1” recommends that an appraisal should, ideally, be carried out at the time of designation in order to inform the designation process.

7.3 The Planning Practice Guidance ‘Conserving and enhancing the historic environment’ confirms that a conservation area appraisal can be used to help local planning authorities develop a management plan and appropriate policies
for the Local Plan. It states that a good appraisal will consider what features make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of the conservation area, thereby identifying opportunities for beneficial change or the need for planning protection.

7.4 Once adopted, a conservation area appraisal will become a material consideration in the determination of planning applications within the area it covers.

8. **Human Resource Implications**

8.1 There are no human resource implications if these draft appraisals are adopted.

9. **Conclusion**

9.1 Officers have produced conservation area appraisals for two areas that explain what is special about each area and identify elements that contribute to the significance as a whole. They provide a greater understanding of an area’s character and help to explain and support the original conservation area designation.

9.2 Officers recommend that the Executive adopts the draft appraisals for Ripley and Holmbury St Mary. Once adopted, they will form a material consideration in planning decisions and may be used in the determination of planning appeals and Secretary of State decisions.

10. **Background Papers**


11. **Appendices**

Appendix 1: A summary of the consultation responses and officer responses for the Ripley Conservation Area Appraisal

Appendix 2: A summary of the consultation responses and officers responses for the Holmbury St Mary Conservation Area Appraisal

Appendix 3: The draft Ripley Conservation Area Appraisal

Appendix 4: The draft Holmbury St Mary Conservation Area Appraisal