

Planning & Transport Policy Working Group Meeting	
Meeting Date	19th September 2023
Report Title	Bredgar Conservation Area review
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins - Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Joanne Johnson – Head of Regeneration, Economic Development and Property and Interim Head of Planning
Lead Officer	Jhilmil Kishore - Senior Conservation & Design Officer (Projects)
Classification	Open
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To note the content of the public consultation draft of the character appraisal and management strategy document produced for the review, and the representations made on this by interested parties, the details of which are set out in the report appendices. 2. To support and recommend to Policy and Resources Committee that the changes to the review document proposed in response to the representations are agreed.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to make the Planning & Transport Policy Working Group aware of some proposed boundary changes to the Bredgar Conservation Area and to recommend that the conservation area be formally re-designated under section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990. The proposals include a detailed character appraisal and associated management strategy in line with current good practice for the management of conservation areas. Officers recommend that the Planning & Transport Policy Working Group supports the changes to the review document set out in **Appendix i** and as reflected in **Appendix ii**). Furthermore, that the Planning & Transport Policy Working Group recommend the proposed changes to Policy & Resources Committee.

2 Background

- 2.1 Bredgar Conservation Area was first designated in November 1973. It was reviewed by Swale Borough Council in 2000 as well as on the 2 February 2006 when it was extended and formally re-designated. A brief character appraisal accompanied the re-designation in 2006. There is a formal requirement under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 for Conservation Areas to be reviewed from ‘time to time’.

2.2 This review work is part of a wider range of conservation area review work requested by the Western Area Committee. As the existing level of officer resource did not allow for this review work to be carried out in-house, the Western Area Committee agreed to fund the use of an external consultant to carry out the work. The same consultant (Peter Bell) who carried out the review of Rodmersham Church Street, Rodmersham Green and Tunstall conservation areas last year was re-appointed to undertake the review of Bredgar and Hartlip Conservation Areas.

3 Proposals

3.1 The proposal is to re-designate and amend the boundary of the conservation area and to equip it with a detailed character appraisal and a complementary management strategy which will assist with development management and heritage conservation purposes over the next decade or more. It will be a matter for the Policy & Resources Committee to decide whether to formally adopt the Bredgar Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Strategy (as recommended and set out in **Appendix ii**, following consultation feedback, or otherwise), but the Planning & Transport Policy Working Group are requested to provide feedback as part of the process of reaching a decision.

3.2 Part of the review process involved an assessment of whether the area should be extended or reduced in size. In this regard particular consideration was given to extending the conservation area west to include parts of Silver Street and north to include more of The Street. However, these areas are separated from the historic core of the village by modern development which means that there would be no spatial or visual continuity to the area of special architectural or historic interest. Consequently, it is recommended that the boundary should not be extended or revised.

3.3 Of all the outlying areas reviewed during the visit to Bredgar, Bexon was the most characterful, coherent and comprises 8 statutory listed heritage assets. Officers recommend that Bexon is reviewed as a possible new conservation area in its own right - to include properties along Hawks Hill Lane and cluster of properties on Bexon Lane to northeast of Hawks Hill Lane.

3.4 The recommendation is:

- Members note the content of the public consultation draft of the character appraisal and management strategy document produced for the review, and the representations made on this by interested parties, the details of which are set out in the report appendices; and
- Support and recommend to Policy and Resources Committee that the changes to the review document proposed in response to the recommendations are agreed.

4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 4.1 One option would be to not take this review work any further. This is not recommended because it would risk the justifiable continuation of the designation and/or the appropriately sensitive and positive management of the conservation area and its wider setting moving forward.
- 4.2 A second possible option would be to disregard some elements, or all of the feedback received, in terms of the suggested boundary change(s). However, whilst it is considered that the appraisal and management plan (to support the redesignation of the conservation area) is essentially sound, the feedback provided from the local community is valuable and to ignore any of this feedback without sound reasons would call the value of the consultation process into question and potentially deliver reputational damage to the Council.
- 4.3 A third possible option would be to suspend the work on this review until some point in the future. Whilst this option would not result in wasted officer time, it could still lead to (a) the designation being challenged, (b) reputational damage to the Council and/or (c) development and associated infrastructure provision decisions being made for the locality without an appropriate understanding and appreciation of the special qualities of the Bredgar Conservation Area.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 A 6-week public consultation ran from Monday 3rd July 2023 until Monday 14th August 2023.
- 5.2 All those parties with property within or overlapping the current conservation area boundary were notified in writing of the review and were invited to comment on it, as were key relevant organisations including Kent County Council and Historic England.
- 5.3 The previous normal practice of providing hard copies of the review document at Swale House has now been discontinued, but the review document was available to view/download on-line via the Council's website for the duration of the 6-week public consultation period.
- 5.4 A total of 3 consultation responses have been received. One from the Bredgar Parish Council, one from a local resident of Bredgar and one from Historic England. The officer's response to these responses (as summarised) is attached as appendix i.
- 5.5 Historic England has responded advising that it has no substantive comments to make.

- 5.6 Kent County Council in its function as the Highway Authority was consulted on the conservation area review but provided no feedback.
- 5.7 A presentation was done to Western Area Committee on 31st August 2023, highlighting the main aspects of the Bredgar Conservation Area Review.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	<p>Priority 2 of the Plan is: 'Investing in our environment and responding positively to global challenges'. Objectives 2.1, 2.4 and 2.5 of this priority are respectively to:</p> <p>(2.1) 'Develop a coherent strategy to address the climate and ecological emergencies, aiming for carbon neutrality in the council's own operations by 2025 and in the whole borough by 2020, and pursue all opportunities to enhance biodiversity across the borough'.</p> <p>(2.4) 'Recognise and support our local heritage to give people pride in the place they live and boost the local tourism industry.'</p> <p>(2.5) 'Work towards a cleaner borough where recycling remains a focus and ensure that the council acts as an exemplar environmental steward, making space for nature wherever possible'.</p> <p>The character appraisal and management strategy document, once amended as appropriate and subsequently adopted would support all 3 of the above-stated objectives from the Corporate Plan.</p>
Financial, Resource and Property	<p>Implementing some aspects of the proposed Management Plan may have financial and resource implications for the council, particularly if it is decided to proceed with an Article 4 Direction review or/and signage review. These costs are not yet budgeted for and may need to be considered within any future Heritage Strategy Action Plans.</p> <p>Assessment of Bexon as a possible new conservation area will have financial and resource implications for the council.</p>
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	<p>The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on every local planning authority to "<i>determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance</i>" and, from time to time, to review the functioning existing conservation areas.</p>
Crime and Disorder	None identified at this stage.

Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	One of the three dimensions of sustainable development is its environmental role: contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment.
Health and Wellbeing	The health and wellbeing aspects of interaction with heritage assets and heritage related projects are referenced in the adopted Heritage Strategy which underpins this review work.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	None identified at this stage.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	None identified at this stage.
Equality and Diversity	None identified at this stage.
Privacy and Data Protection	None identified at this stage.

7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix i: Public consultation – table of representations (in summary form), and the council’s response to them.
- Appendix ii: Public consultation version of the 2023 draft Bredgar character appraisal and management plan document.

8 Background Papers

A Heritage Strategy for Swale 2020-2032 Adopted March 2020