

HISTORIC SETTLEMENT ASSESSMENT REPORTS

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks Members views on the value of preparing assessment reports of historic settlements in the district, following the receipt of a proposal from the Heritage Conservation Branch of Essex County Council.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The preparation of historic settlement assessment reports is not a new idea. Members will no doubt recall the work carried out in the past to prepare detailed reports of both Rochford and Rayleigh towns under the umbrella of a document called 'Essex Historic Towns'. This document was adopted as supplementary planning guidance. (minute 71/99)
- 2.2 The methodology for the study of the history and archaeology of Rayleigh and Rochford was provided by English Heritage working in partnership with the Heritage Conservation Branch at the County Council. It is now suggested that this approach could be usefully applied to other historic settlements in the district.

3 ASSESSMENT REPORTS

- 3.1 The key purpose of the assessment reports is to establish the extent and nature of the historic settlement so as to inform the planning process and advise on the management and promotion of the historic environment. Information from assessments can feed into conservation area appraisal reports and into the local plan.
- 3.2 Assessment reports also help to inform local people about the historic value of their environment, and can help develop community spirit and pride in a town or village.
- 3.3 The text of the assessment document will be accompanied by a series of maps and plans that help to identify the development of a settlement and to identify important feature on the ground.

4 DISCUSSION

- 4.1 There is no doubt that the historic settlement assessment reports for Rochford and Rayleigh provide an invaluable record of the development of those towns, and that they do make a contribution to the local plan policy framework and to development control decision making.

- 4.2 On that basis it is considered there is some significant justification to consider the options for additional reports in the district. The settlements that might be considered for analysis are: Paglesham, Canewdon, and Great Wakering, which all include conservation areas, though there would be benefits perhaps in examining the historic core of Ashingdon around the church.
- 4.3 If Members were convinced of the usefulness of assessment, the work would be carried out in partnership with the Heritage Conservation Branch with a matched financial contribution from each authority. The final reports would be adopted as Local Plan Supplementary Planning Guidance.
- 4.4 The timescale for the production of the reports would need to be agreed with County, though it would be important to have them completed within the next 12 months to ensure they can be tied to the local plan as supplementary planning guidance.

5 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Historic Settlement Assessments provide valuable information about the development of towns and villages.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The cost of an assessment per settlement would be about £1,500 split equally between Rochford Council and Essex County Council. If the three settlements of Paglesham, Canewdon and Great Wakering were analysed the total cost to Rochford would be £2250. If Ashingdon was also considered this cost would rise to £3000. The cost for this work can be funded from the local plans budget.

9 RECOMMENDATION

It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

To commission the preparation of Historic Settlement Assessment Reports for Paglesham, Canewdon and Great Wakering as outlined in the report and to determine whether a report should also be prepared for Ashingdon. (HPS)

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Background Papers:

Letter from Essex County Council dated 22 July 2002.

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