

RAYLEIGH – CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides details of the first Conservation Area Appraisal prepared for Rayleigh and seeks Members' agreement to arrangements for public consultation prior to final publication.
- 1.2 A Conservation Area Appraisal is currently being prepared for Rochford and it is anticipated that appraisals will be completed for the remaining conservation areas in 2006/07.
- 1.3 A copy of the Rayleigh appraisal has been placed in the Members' Library and circulated under separate cover to all Members of the Committee.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 A local authority's performance in designating conservation areas, defining the special architectural or historic interest through character appraisals and publishing management proposals is now measured by a new Best Value Performance Indicator. BV219 requires Local Authorities to:-
 - list their total number of conservation areas;
 - indicate the percentage with an up-to-date character appraisal; and
 - indicate the percentage with published management proposals.
- 2.2 Arrangements are in hand to ensure that Rochford achieves 100% coverage of character appraisals and management plans by the end of the 2006/07 financial year. This report outlines the details of the first appraisal for Rayleigh.
- 2.3 Conservation area character appraisals cannot be adopted as Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD). The conservation area policy SPD will, though, provide guidance on the historic environment, expanding on policies in the Rochford Core Strategy, and will make specific reference to the character appraisals.
- 2.4 Character appraisals and management plans are then crucial to informing the preparation of conservation area SPDs and will be an essential tool informing development control, as well as performing an educational and informative role for the local community.

3 RAYLEIGH APPRAISAL

- 3.1 The appraisal document considered the:-

- planning policy framework;
 - importance of the Mount;
 - use of buildings;
 - origins and development of the town; and
 - materials and detailing.
- 3.2 At the core of the document are sections identifying character zones and spatial inter-relationships and a detailed area analysis, together with an assessment of the contributions each building makes to the conservation area.
- 3.3 Finally, the document provides a series of management proposals emerging from the character analysis. At this stage, the proposals are for discussion and public consultation, but the suggestion for an Article 4 direction (page 51 of the report) is discussed later in this report.

4 CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Good practice advice from English Heritage is that involving the community should be an integral part of the appraisal process. Therefore, prior to publishing the final version of the document, it is proposed to undertake community consultation as follows:-
- produce and circulate a short summary leaflet;
 - consult community groups including the Rayleigh Civic Society and the Chamber of Trade;
 - consult the Town Council;
 - make the document available on the Council's website; and
 - issue a press release.
- 4.2 Following consultation, the results will be reported back to Members and a section added to the appraisal document to explain the consultation process and how the responses were considered and taken into account.
- 4.3 It is anticipated that consultation will take place during April, May and June (there are no statutory timescales) and that, all being well, the outcomes can be reported back to Members in July.

5 ARTICLE 4 DIRECTION

- 5.1 The effect of an Article 4 direction would be to bring certain matters into the control of the Council in order to protect the conservation area from change. The works that might reasonably be brought into control are listed on page 52 of the report, and primarily relate to basic changes to windows and doors, the aim being to limit the spread of uPVC in the conservation area.
- 5.2 There are two main types of Article 4 directions. Article 4(1) directions must be approved by the Secretary of State and relate to any buildings in a conservation area. Article 4(2) directions on the other hand relate solely to dwelling houses and can be confirmed by the Local Planning Authority.
- 5.3 In Rayleigh, there are few unlisted dwellings, but nevertheless it would be worthwhile ensuring that changes to windows, doors, external walls and boundaries are controlled. However, since the main bulk of buildings in the conservation area are not dwellings it is considered that an Article 4(1) direction would be most appropriate, accepting that final approval rests with the Secretary of State.
- 5.4 If Members agree that additional control over changes to buildings is warranted, it is suggested that arrangements be made to prepare an Article 4(1) direction to reduce the likelihood of any works being carried out before the measure comes into force.

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The Rayleigh Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan is the first in a series of appraisal documents that will cover all the conservation areas in the District. These documents will feed into the policies and proposals dealing with conservation that will be included in the emerging development plan and supplementary planning documents.
- 6.2 The timetable for the completion of the Rayleigh appraisal is suggested as:-
- consultation – April – June 2006;
 - report to Committee – July 2006; and
 - publication – September 2006.
- 6.3 One of the proposals included in the draft document is the preparation of an Article 4 direction, and it is suggested that Members approve this element for implementation.

7 RECOMMENDATION

7.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

- (1) That the Rayleigh Conservation Area Appraisal Management Plan be approved for consultation.
- (2) That the results of the consultation be reported back in July 2006.
- (3) That an Article 4(1) direction be prepared, as explained in the report.

Shaun Scrutton

Head of Planning and Transportation Services

Background Papers:-

Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas, English Heritage, 2006.

Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals, English Heritage, 2006.

For further information please contact Shaun Scrutton on:-

Tel:- 01702 318 100

E-Mail:- shaun.scrutton@rochford.gov.uk