

South Northamptonshire Council

Planning Policy and Regeneration Strategy Committee

18 March 2020

<p>An assessment of the remaining villages within South Northamptonshire District as potential Conservation Areas</p>
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Report of the Assistant Director – Planning and Economy

This report is public.

Purpose of report

For Members to consider the assessment of the 14 remaining villages which considers whether they have special architectural or historic interest necessary to justify designation as conservation areas.

1.0 Recommendation

The meeting is recommended:

- 1.1 That following the assessment, work to designate the remaining 14 villages as individual conservation areas is not pursued as the villages do not fulfil the criteria to justify designation.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 Following the recent consultation of the Conservation Strategy for South Northamptonshire in 2016, it was identified that conservation areas designation formed a strong element within “preserving what is special” in the district. Conservation area appraisals and reviews have been highlighted as an important way of ensuring that this aspect of policy framework is up to date and robust.
- 2.2 In 2011 the Design and Conservation Team commenced a review of the district’s then 54 conservation areas. By the end of March 2017, 61 areas of special architectural or historic interest had been designated as conservation areas with 53 of the 54 pre 2011 conservation areas having been reviewed and re-designated with an up to date boundary, appraisal and management plan.
- 2.3 In addition 7 new conservation areas have been adopted across the District including two significant designations which cover the lengths of the Grand Union and Oxford Canals as they pass through South Northamptonshire.

- 2.4 The start of 2016-2017 financial year also marked the start of a second phase of work which commenced an assessment of the qualities of the district's 38 settlements not benefiting from a conservation area.
- 2.5 The assessment of an undesignated settlement needs to consider statutory legislation in the Planning Act 1990, which states that conservation areas need to be "areas of special architectural and historic interest the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve and enhance." The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states within its guidance, in paragraph 186, that "When considering the designation of conservation area, local planning authorities should ensure that an area justifies such status because of its special architectural or historic interest and that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest."
- 2.6 The criteria for identifying the propriety of the reviews, was subject to two main concerns:
- Pressure for development through the Local Plan Part 2,
 - Settlements under challenge from development including HS2 and wind farm developments.

It is important to note that the review process does not automatically guarantee that conservation areas will be designation at any of those settlements.

- 2.7 An assessment is made following a set of criteria (see Appendix) based on guidance set out in the Historic England's Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management as well as the Planning (Listed Building Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the guidance in the NPPF. The criteria aims to assess three key elements within a settlement which all contribute to an area's character.
- Spatial Analysis- considers the relationship between buildings, plan form, scale and massing, as well as views and the impact of vegetation.
 - Architectural Analysis- looks at the use of traditional materials, the design and style of properties, the contributions of the buildings and their impact on the character of the area.
 - Historical Analysis- looks at the development of the area through Historic Environment Records such as maps, and historical and archaeological archives.
- 2.8 An assessment of the remaining villages was undertaken in 2019/2020 as part of this rolling programme of works.

3.0 Summary of the Assessment

- 3.1 Following the completion of this blanket assessment, based on the criteria set out (see Appendix for full report), it is recommended that the 14 villages, do not fulfil the criteria set out under legislation and therefore should not be designated as Conservation Areas. A brief outline of reasons for this recommendation are below, however for specific reasons for each village further information can be found in Appendix B:

- The remaining villages all have individual, interesting histories however it is clear that for all these histories have not resulted in retained notable character features, key phases of development, or notable historic events which could then contribute to their special interest.
- A number of these villages have expanded since the post war period, and the outskirts are now marked with post war housing. Modern 20th century infill has disrupted most if not all the historic streetscapes with varying materials, styles and form.
- The villages all seem to lack a sense of cohesion within the built form. The individual historic units do not interconnect with each other due to modern infill and therefore do not create a cohesive character that of which could be considered “special”.
- The remaining built form of the villages has envelopes of historic buildings constructed in a traditional manner of local importance however they are rarely as a collection of buildings representing a range of uses that document the area’s history, nor do they represent the impact of a particular architectural vision for the area.
- Their materials and features do not contribute to the immediate local distinctiveness or identity of each of the villages. Furthermore, the fenestration on several of the historic properties have been unsympathetically changed resulting in loss of original timber fenestration, roofing materials, and unsympathetic extensions. These changes are not in keeping with the style and age of the properties and dilute the character of the villages.
- Surrounding each of the villages are large open fields, which demonstrate the agricultural background of each of the settlements which helps place them within an agrarian context. These areas of land, whilst not of any particular historic or architectural significance, contribute to the setting of the villages. However, these open areas are not considered to contribute to the areas special interest.

4.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

4.1 The following alternative options have been identified:

Option 1: To agree the recommendation, that following the appraisal, work to designate the 14 villages as conservation areas is not pursued.

Option 2: To amend the recommendations to the appraisal.

Option 3: To not agree the recommendation, and instead pursue further work into designating the 14 villages as conservation areas.

5.0 Implications

Resource and Legal Implications

5.1 No direct implications arising from this report.

Comments checked by:

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5.2 Financial Implications

Any expenditure in relation to the conservation area reviews for the villages will be from existing resources.

Comments checked by:
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6.0 Decision Information

Wards Affected

Blakesley and Cote, Brafield and Yardley, Grange Park, Hackleton, Middleton Cheney, Salcey, Steane, Washington, Whittlewood

Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

Protected, Clean and Green
Thriving Communities and Wellbeing
District of Opportunity and Growth

Lead Councillor

Councillor Phil Bignell – Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Planning

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
Appendix 1	Assessment of Remaining Villages as Potential Conservation Areas
Appendix 2	Historic England's Criteria taken from <i>Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management</i>
Appendix 3	Individual Assessments of the 14 Remaining Villages and Accompanying Maps
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