
**HAUGHTON-LE-SKERNE CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER
APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN**

**Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor Chris McEwan,
Economy and Regeneration Portfolio**

Responsible Director - Ian Williams, Director of Economic Growth

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To report the outcome of the consultation process for Haughton-le-Skerne Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan, including comments received on the proposed boundary addition.
2. To seek Members' approval of the Haughton-le-Skerne Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan and for the boundary addition it proposes. A copy of the document is attached at **Appendix 1**.

Summary

3. Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 says that it is the duty of Local Planning Authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area that are Conservation Areas.
4. This is achieved through Conservation Area Character Appraisals and Management Plans and ultimately through detailed policy in the Local Plan.
5. The Environment Scrutiny Review Action Plan adopted by the Cabinet highlighted the need for Conservation Area Character Appraisals and Management Plans to be undertaken.
6. Through Character Appraisals and Management Plans, sound decisions can be made on planning applications received for development within Conservation Areas.
7. The Haughton-le-Skerne document is the ninth in a programme of 16 Conservation Area Character Appraisals.

Recommendation

- It is recommended that Cabinet approve the attached Haughton-le-Skerne Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan including the boundary addition proposed.

Reasons

- To provide a document to assist in the preservation and enhancement of the Haughton-le-Skerne Conservation Area.

Ian Williams
Director of Economic Growth

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

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S17 Crime and Disorder	The Character Appraisal encourages a high standard of environment.
Health and Well Being	The Character Appraisal encourages a high standard of environment, preserving and enhancing the existing area.
Carbon Impact	The Character Appraisal encourages a high quality, sustainable environment within the Conservation Area.
Diversity	No issues are raised.
Wards Affected	Haughton East
Groups Affected	Residents and business within and immediately adjacent to Haughton-le-Skerne Conservation Area.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not recommend a change to the Council's budget or policy framework.
Key Decision	No.
Urgent Decision	For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter.
One Darlington Perfectly Placed	The Character Appraisal contributes towards the corporate priorities of One Darlington Perfectly Placed.
Efficiency	The Character Appraisal should lead to savings in officer time and workload during pre-application and planning application processes.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

10. Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 imposes a duty on Local Planning Authorities to designate as Conservation Areas any areas that from time to time they determine are 'areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. Conservation Areas are places where buildings and the spaces around them interact to form distinctly recognisable areas of special quality and interest.
11. Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 emphasises that it is also the duty of Local Planning Authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area that are Conservation Areas. This is best achieved through Conservation Area Character Appraisals because they provide locally distinctive guidance about how best to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of Conservation Areas.
12. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) references the need for Local Planning Authorities to make an assessment of the special interest, character and appearance of all Conservation Areas in their areas, which is achieved through a Character Appraisal and Management Plan. The NPPF also highlights the desire to make sound and well informed planning decisions, considering their effect on the significance of Conservation Areas, which a Character Appraisal identifies.
13. Darlington has 16 Conservation Areas designated between 1968 and 1997; the Haughton-le-Skerne Conservation Area was designated on 26 March 1968, making it was one of the first. The Character Appraisal for Haughton-le-Skerne is the ninth in the programme of Conservation Area Character Appraisals.
14. Character Appraisals and Management Plans are a tool to assist in the preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas. Through Character Appraisals, areas, buildings and spaces of special landscape or historic and / or architectural character can be highlighted as possessing particular interest, and being worthy of preservation and enhancement. Features of special interest, such as historic walls, stiles, open spaces, trees or historic surfaces can be highlighted through the Character Appraisal as can features causing intrusion or damage.
15. The production of a Character Appraisal and Management Plan is a step in the process of preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of a designated area, providing a basis for making sustainable decisions about its future. Undertaking such a document offers the opportunity to re-asses the designated area and to evaluate and record its special interest. A Character Appraisal and Management Plan is not an end in itself, the process should lead to a better understanding of the character of the area and what makes it the place it is today, and so provide the basis for an Article 4 Direction to remove Permitted Development Rights if this is considered appropriate. Character Appraisals are a material consideration in planning decisions and so provide a sound basis,

defensible on appeal, for Development Plan policies and Development Management decisions.

16. Defining the 'special interest' of an area is the main purpose of a Character Appraisal and is gained from the area's character and appearance but other senses and experiences, local environmental conditions and historical associations can be drawn on. Historic street patterns (building plots, layouts and the relationship of buildings to open spaces), archaeology (including any Scheduled Monuments), buildings (listed and unlisted), spaces and townscape, materials, green spaces, uses and the built environment and landscape can all contribute towards the character of an area.
17. The document is an assessment of the area's special architectural and historic interest, based on careful analysis of the area as a result of time spent in the area and academic and journalistic sources.
18. Potential boundary additions are considered when a Character Appraisal and Management Plan is drafted. The local Residents' Association proposed a boundary addition along Stockton Road on the basis that it formed part of the original village and therefore is worthy of inclusion. Historic maps evidence this to be the case, so the boundary addition was proposed as part of public engagement on the document. Other residents are supportive of it so it remains in the document for approval. The key map at **Appendix 2** shows the proposed revised boundary.
19. If the boundary addition is hereby approved all residents and businesses within it will be notified that they are within a Conservation Area and what that means for them, which is control over demolition of buildings, and works to trees, and restrictions on permitted developments.
20. An Article 4 Direction would remove residents' 'permitted development rights' (their allowance to undertake some minor works to their homes without the need to apply for planning permission). These types of small incremental changes can have a detrimental effect on the character of the area by eroding its special qualities, as identified in the Character Appraisal. Cumulatively the impact of such changes can be considerably more harmful than their individual impact, putting the Conservation Area's significance at risk.
21. The potential for an Article 4 Direction was included within the draft document to gauge opinion and the level of support. Whilst all residents who responded formally were supportive of the idea, and most spoken with informally were, Haughton Conservation Area is not currently considered to be at risk, and therefore warrant the introduction of an Article 14 direction. This position will be monitored and reviewed by officers on a regular basis.

Legal Implications

22. If approved, the boundary addition means more properties will lie within a designated Conservation Area. This provides the local planning authority with additional statutory powers affecting, for example, demolition of buildings, works to

trees, publicity procedures for planning applications and restrictions placed on permitted development rights.

Equalities Considerations

23. An Equalities Impact Assessment of the Character Appraisal was undertaken. This suggests little if any direct impact on the protected characteristics of the area.

Consultation

24. Public participation and engagement is an integral part of the process to encourage valuable public understanding and ownership. The formal consultation period ran from Monday 17 March 2014 until Wednesday 30 May 2014, during which people were encouraged to comment on the draft Character Appraisal and Management Plan, including the Key Map.
25. Residents and businesses within the Conservation Area were a high priority and were likely to want more input than those living elsewhere in the Borough. A drop-in event was held at St Andrew's Church Hall, Haughton Green between 17:30 and 19:30 on Monday 24 March 2014. At the event there was a rolling Powerpoint presentation, displays boards, maps, copies of the draft document and comments forms. Attendees were encouraged to ask questions and make comments. The drop-in event held attracted approximately 28 people.
26. Four formal responses were received in the form of completed comments forms, letters and emails all from members of the public. All respondents were supportive of the proposed boundary addition and of the principle of an Article 4 Direction.
27. Residents are supportive of Conservation Area designation and of the Character Appraisal's purpose to better guide planning decisions in the area, some of which they have not been happy with. Detailed issues raised by respondents include the 'gaudy' appearance of the shop and its multitude of advertisements; the railings and general appearance of the open land north of the river, after the bridge and on the right hand side (when entering Haughton from the town); an 'abandoned' car park on Kennel Lane; and the 'out of place' Rymers Court development.
28. A summary of respondents' comments and officer's response to them, including whether the Character Appraisal has been amended as a result of comments, can be found at **Appendix 3**.
29. If approved, we are required to advertise the boundary addition in the London Gazette, a historic requirement to ensure all landowners are aware of Conservation Area designations affecting their properties and land.