

WIRRAL COUNCIL

PLANNING COMMITTEE: 10TH AUGUST 2010

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF TECHNICAL SERVICES

PROPOSED ADOPTION OF THE OXTON CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL 2010

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Council has a statutory duty to develop policies that promote the preservation and enhancement of the conservation areas within the Borough of Wirral. The government has introduced the concept of Conservation Area appraisals in recent years in order to provide an audit of every conservation area in terms of its special features, and how they can best be preserved for the future in the light of local circumstances.
- 1.2 These documents have themselves evolved over time to encompass the following: historical analysis, policy initiatives, landscape and topography, character zones, the public realm, traffic management, dilapidation and heritage at risk, negative factors and opportunities for enhancement. The objective of this report is to recommend to members that the latest draft document be formally adopted so that it can form a material reference to be consulted in matters relating to built environment conservation in and around Oxton village.
- 1.3 One important theme that has come out of the appraisal process has been the practice of community engagement and partnership working with local amenity groups. The Council is keen to explore opportunities for collaborative working with all constructive partners and has built up a productive working relationship with the Oxton Society. The Society was founded in 1979 to accompany the designation of the Oxton Conservation Area in the same year, and, in common with the Council, its mission is to support the ongoing celebration of Oxton's particular character, and the life and vigour of the village community. The Society has campaigned for better recognition of the village's special character, and supports stronger controls for heritage protection, in particular for the settlement's sandstone walls.
- 1.4 Oxton is not entirely new to appraisals, one having been prepared in 2006 to investigate the potential for extension of the conservation area boundaries. After a final draft was prepared, the Society and the Council jointly resolved to undertake a more comprehensive document that would re-appraise the area as a whole, and that could look

forward to the production and adoption of a management plan.

- 1.5 This appraisal has been jointly funded by Wirral Council and the Oxton Society, each body contributing 50% of the production costs. The final account has now been settled, although the Council reserves the right to make editorial changes now and in the future, subject to agreement with the authors, Donald Insall Associates, and other parties where appropriate. DI Assocs have produced the great majority of Wirral Council's Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans in recent years, and have been receptive to the amendments over the initial drafts as required by both funders. Only one member of the public has objected to the partnership agreement between the Society and the Council, and this has not prompted any fundamental changes in the way the agreement operates.
- 1.6 The document to be adopted is the January 2010 final draft, plus appendices.

2.0 PROCESS AND POLICY

Since this project does not support a new designation, there is no need to rehearse here the implications of conservation area designation. However, the appraisal does look forward to extending those controls into some small areas of new territory adjacent to the present boundary. The areas that could be incorporated involve portions of the following roads: Normanston Road/Derwent Road, Birch Road, Village Road, Wellington Road, Talbot Road, Mill Hill and Ingestre Road. The addition of these areas will be the subject of a future stand-alone report and consultation, as will proposals to adopt Article 4 directions that further restrict owner's permitted development rights.

- 2.1 If and when the boundary changes and new controls are agreed, the prospective management plan will also be put before residents and the Council. Parallel to this process of document preparation will be the production of a conservation planning policy for the Oxton Conservation Area, which will then be incorporated into the Local Development Framework and its successors.
- 2.2 In the meantime, if adopted, the conservation area appraisal will be made publicly available via local libraries and the Council's website.

3.0 FINANCIAL AND STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are few direct staffing or financial implications arising directly from the adoption of this document, although the later stages in the project as described above, will impact somewhat on staffing resources.

4.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no Equal Opportunity implications arising directly from this report.

5.0 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no Human Rights implications arising directly from this report.

6.0 LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The Oxton Conservation Area is located within the Prenton Ward.

7.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The protection and enhancement of the built environment through the retention of local distinctiveness and character and the retention of the embodied energy of existing buildings underlies the principles of Agenda 21.

8.0 CRIME AND DISORDER STRATEGY/COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The preservation and enhancement of the built environment can aid community cohesion through the conservation of the cherished local scene. Opportunities to promote collective ownership of the local environment help to prevent vandalism and social dislocation.

9.0 ANTI-POVERTY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no Anti-Poverty Implications arising directly from this report

10.0 SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no Social Inclusion Implications arising directly from this report

11.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 The Oxton Conservation Area Appraisal, January 2010

12.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee adopts the above document as a material reference in planning and conservation matters, and that this report is referred to Cabinet for approval.

DAVID GREEN
Director of Technical Services

The initial draft of this report was prepared by Matthew Crook, Senior Conservation Officer who may be contacted on 606 2485