

**REPORT TO:** Executive Board Sub-Committee

**DATE:** 11<sup>th</sup> September 2008

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director – Environment

**SUBJECT:** Halton Village Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan

**WARDS:** Castlefields

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 This report seeks the Board's approval for the publication of the Halton Village Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (Appendix A) for public consultation.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That**

- 1) The draft Halton Village Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (Appendix A) is approved for the purposes of public consultation for a two week period;**
- 2) Any further editorial and technical amendments that do not materially affect the content of the document be agreed by the Operational Director (Environmental & Regulatory Services) in consultation with the Executive Board Member for Planning, Transportation, Regeneration and Renewal, as necessary, before the document is published for public consultation;**
- 3) The results of the public consultation exercise and consequent recommended modifications to the draft Halton Village Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan be reported back to the Executive Board, for resolution to adopt the document; and**
- 4) The schedule for future Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan production, given in Appendix B to this report, is approved.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 Halton Village lies immediately adjacent to Halton Lea in Runcorn New Town, bordered by Town Park and a number of residential areas including Halton Brow and Castlefields. The central focus of Halton Village is Halton Castle, located on Castle Road.

- 3.2 Halton Village was designated as a Conservation Area in April 1970. The statutory definition of a conservation area is ‘an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.’ Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on local authorities to formulate and publish proposals for designated conservation areas.
- 3.3 National policies for the designation, protection and enhancement of conservation areas are set out within Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 15, Planning and the Historic Environment. This document states that in exercising their planning functions, local authorities must pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of such areas. The Secretary of State has the view that this should also be a material consideration in determining planning applications that affect the setting or views into and out of conservation areas.
- 3.4 Guidance published by English Heritage states that, “A clear, comprehensive appraisal of the character of a conservation area provides a sound basis for development control and for developing initiatives to improve the area”. In addition, English Heritage guidance recommends that appraisals should be carried out for all new, or extensions to existing, conservation areas as a matter of course in order to inform the designation process. It also recommends that priority be given to preparing appraisals for those areas where the pressure for change is the greatest.
- 3.5 It is with the above statutory duty in mind that the Council has produced a draft Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan for Halton Village (attached as Appendix A). The document is split into two parts: the Conservation Area Appraisal (Part 1) and the Management Plan (Part 2), although these two sections are largely interconnected and interdependent. Both of these sections have been produced in line with English Heritage’s published guidance on conservation area appraisals and the management of conservation areas. The draft document is based on specialist work undertaken by Donald Insall Associates Ltd, as instructed by the Council.
- 3.6 The Conservation Area Appraisal (Part 1) contains the following: details of the location of Halton Village; and the village’s historic development; a description of the landscapes and vistas surrounding the area; the contribution of individual buildings and the townscape as a whole; a record of buildings architecture, materials and details; the changes amounting from unsympathetic alterations and extensions; and an assessment of lost buildings within the area. This information feeds into an assessment of the special character of the village and the defining of character zones.

- 3.7 The Management Plan (Part 2) sets out proposals for the maintenance and improvement of the village. This includes general management proposals for new development, reinstatement of lost features, landscaping and streetscapes. It also includes proposals for future community involvement and the potential use of grants and repair notices for buildings in the Conservation Area. In addition, the Management Plan proposes more specific management projects, which focus on distinct issues, including boundary amendments and potential scope for the use of Article 4 directions, and particular buildings or areas within the village.
- 3.8 Several appendices to the Halton Village Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan have been produced including maps and plans of key features of the built and natural environment, and historic maps. Pictorial representations of some of the management proposals have also been drawn up, including a map of proposed boundary amendments. A Gazetteer of all of the buildings within the Conservation Area has also been produced.
- 3.9 There is currently no statutory obligation to engage in public consultation in respect of conservation area appraisals and management plans. However, it is widely considered to be good practice to involve the local community in assessing the value of a conservation area. English Heritage recommend that public participation should be an integral part of the appraisal process, and assert that local consultation can help to bring valuable public understanding and ownership to proposals for the area. It should be noted that the document has already been subject to internal consultation with officers from relevant divisions.
- 3.10 Local councillors will be notified of the publication of the document for public consultation, and will receive a paper copy of the document, as well as a responses form and an explanatory letter.
- 3.11 Once all of the comments have been received and considered, they will be reported back to Executive Board along with the final draft of the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan for approval.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Once formally adopted, the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan will be a material consideration in the matter of assessing planning applications in, or directly affecting, Halton Village Conservation Area, through the development control process. The document will also help to inform future projects for the management and maintenance of the historic environment in Halton Village.
- 4.2 The Management Plan gives proposals for boundary amendments to the Halton Village Conservation Area, and the imposition of Article 4

directions, which, if formally adopted, would limit (otherwise permitted) development within some parts of the Conservation Area. Of particular note is the proposal that Halton Brow should be considered as a potential extension to the existing Halton Village Conservation Area, or be designated as a conservation area in its own right. Dependent on the outcome of the public consultation process, some of these proposals for action may be taken forward, and would require further formal confirmation at the appropriate time.

## **5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Some of the management proposals given in the document suggest that further studies and/or surveys should be undertaken to better assess aspects of the Conservation Area or to inform future management decisions. This will help to coordinate future actions by the Council and its partners for the benefit of residents and business in Halton Village.
- 5.2 In completing this first draft Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan for a Conservation Area in the Borough, it is necessary to explain why Halton Village was chosen, and which areas will be the next to have such a document produced. A schedule for future production of Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans, along with explanatory notes, is attached as Appendix B to this report. Approval of this schedule will provide a work scheme for the production of conservation-related policy documents in the Borough.
- 5.3 It is intended that the Halton Village Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan will be used as a template for undertaking area appraisals and management plans for other conservation areas in Halton. It is in the Council's interest to complete and adopt these documents in order to better manage the Borough's heritage assets.
- 5.4 At the appropriate time in the future both the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan will need to be updated. English Heritage suggest that this adopted documents should be reviewed every five years, although it is envisaged the comprehensiveness of the Halton Village document means that it will remain valid and relevant for a longer period.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

- 6.1 **Children and Young People in Halton**  
No implications envisaged.
- 6.2 **Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**  
The Halton Village Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan intends to inform residents and the local community of the special

character and interest associated with the Conservation Area, and to educate them of the steps required in maintaining and enhancing these assets. Hence, local people will be able to increase their knowledge of processes involved in the conservation of the built environment, and in doing so, may develop new skills.

### **6.3 A Healthy Halton**

The Halton Village Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan include a section on the open and green spaces contained within Halton Village. These strategic assets to the village, and the communities living in and around the Conservation Area, can be variously used for organised sports, children's recreation or informal walking, participation in which can be beneficial for health and well-being. The document aims to help safeguard these green environments, including their flora and fauna, by proposing that surveys and management schedules be prepared, that footpaths and access points be improved, and that indigenous planting be encouraged.

The proposed preparation of a Conservation Trail for Halton Village has the aim of encouraging a greater number of people to take exercise by walking around the Conservation Area and enjoying its built and natural environment.

### **6.4 A Safer Halton**

The Halton Village Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan proposes that footpaths, particularly around Halton Castle, be improved, which will increase the levels of safety associated with their use. Also, the increased use of paths and around the Conservation Area, particularly through green spaces and around Halton Castle, will increase levels of surveillance and animation in the Village, which can help to reduce anti-social behaviour and the fear of crime.

### **6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

The Halton Village Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan will contribute towards the preservation and enhancement of the historic environment in Halton Village.

## **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

It is not envisaged that there are any risks posed by the publication of the Halton Village Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan for public consultation.

The publication of this document does not require a full Risk Assessment to be undertaken.

## **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

There are no equality and diversity issues contained within the Halton Village Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan.

## **9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

<b>Document</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
<b>Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990</b>	<b>Rutland House</b>	<b>Neil MacFarlane</b>
<b>Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment</b>	<b>Rutland House</b>	<b>Neil MacFarlane</b>
<b>Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals (English Heritage, 2006)</b>	<b>Rutland House</b>	<b>Neil MacFarlane</b>
<b>Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas (English Heritage, 2006)</b>	<b>Rutland House</b>	<b>Neil MacFarlane</b>