

**RAMSEY CONSERVATION AREA: DRAFT BOUNDARY REVIEW &  
CHARACTER STATEMENT CONSULTATION DOCUMENTS**

(Report by HEAD OF PLANNING SERVICES)

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Cabinet is asked to consider the two draft documents “Ramsey Conservation Area Boundary review” and the “Ramsey Conservation Area Character Statement” and approve them for public consultation.
- 1.2 The Boundary Review proposes an enlarged Conservation Area for Ramsey in line with English Heritage’s general guidance on the management of conservation areas. This recognises that many existing conservation area boundaries are too tightly drawn.
- 1.3 The conduct of the boundary review has followed the methodology contained in the Huntingdonshire Conservation Area Boundary Review Guidance Document, which was approved by Cabinet in January 2003.
- 1.4 The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty upon local planning authorities to formulate proposals for conserving and enhancing conservation areas consequently once approved (following consultation) this document will carry weight as a ‘material consideration’ in planning decisions.

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 **Ramsey Conservation Area Boundary Review:** Section 69 of the above Act imposes a duty on local planning authorities to designate as conservation areas any “areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”. Planning Policy Guidance 15 (4.2) makes it clear that it is the quality and interest of areas, rather than that of individual buildings, which should be the prime consideration in identifying conservation areas.
- 2.2 Part of Ramsey was designated a conservation area on the 24<sup>th</sup> November 1975. Under Section 69 local planning authorities also have a duty to review their areas from time to time. This review is part of the ongoing programme previously approved by Cabinet and has been conducted according to the Council’s Review Policy adopted in January 2003.
- 2.3 **Ramsey Conservation Area Character Statement:** This assessment covers the area included within the new proposed conservation area boundaries. Section 71 of the 1990 Act places a

duty on local planning authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of its conservation areas. This document fulfils this requirement and links policy for Ramsey to other existing Local Planning Guidance for Huntingdonshire, notably the Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPG (2004) and the Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape Assessment SPG (2004).

### **3. THE PROPOSALS**

3.1 The Boundary Review document has established the extent of the historic core of Ramsey, prior to the building of the peripheral housing estates in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It takes a pragmatic view of how far this core can be preserved and enhanced for the future and includes the setting where this is essential to the specialness of the whole.

3.2 The Ramsey Conservation Area Character Statement reflects the complexity of Ramsey as an historic settlement. The document explores its essential elements and includes:-

- A Statement of Significance, outlining important historic and natural features;
- A brief history of the town's development that shows the contribution of each phase to the overall historic nature of the settlement;
- A breakdown of the town into its neighbourhoods, which forms the basis of an assessment of its character;
- A design code to help and guide prospective developers and homeowners to make design decisions in keeping with the historic nature of the traditional built environment;
- Opportunities within the boundaries of the conservation area open to future enhancement or development.

3.3 The format of the Character Statement differs from previous character statements and reflects the special needs of Ramsey and recent work undertaken by this Local Authority in the development of planning guidance.

### **4. CONCLUSION**

4.1 Production of the boundary review and character statement for Ramsey contributes to the legal obligations of Huntingdonshire District Council as the local planning authority, and reflects the Authority's support of the local community. If Cabinet approves the documents, there will be a period of consultation with the local and statutory bodies. Any comments or changes will be brought back to the Cabinet before either document can be adopted.

### **5.0 RECOMMENDATION**

That the Cabinet approves the two drafts as a basis for external consultation with the statutory bodies, organisations and the general public. A public exhibition will be held and leaflets distributed during this period.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

1. Conservation Area Boundary Review Policy Document, Huntingdonshire District Council, January 2003.
2. Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPG 2004.
3. Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape assessment SPG 2004.

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