

## AGENDA ITEM NO.

COMT  
CABINET

22<sup>ND</sup> NOVEMBER 2005  
15<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2005

### RAMSEY CONSERVATION AREA: BOUNDARY REVIEW, CHARACTER ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT PLAN CONSULTATION DOCUMENTS (Report by Planning Policy Manager)

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Cabinet of the responses to the draft Ramsey Boundary Review, Character Assessment and Management Plan Consultation Documents and to consider the Council's response.

#### 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 Assessment:** This assessment covers the area included within the 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).
- 2.4 **Ramsey Conservation Area Management Plan:** The Management Plan flows from the requirements of Section 71 and presents a series of proposal which, once implemented, will bring enhancement of the Conservation Area. The Plan makes suggestions for a number of projects which will be taken forward in conjunction with appropriate groups of officers and local people.
- 2.5 Cabinet approved these documents for a period of consultation on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2005. This period expired on 19<sup>th</sup> August 2005. During this time, in

addition to the consultation with statutory organisations, public exhibitions have been held in Ramsey and Bury and public notices were posted.

- 2.6 The designation of the revised boundary for Ramsey's Conservation Area and the adoption of the Character Assessment and Management Plan as material considerations in planning decisions would be important steps in protecting the historic environment. The guidance contained in the Character Assessment and will ensure that any forthcoming development will be of a high architectural and urban design quality.

### **3. THE CONSULTATION RESPONSE**

- 3.1 18 written responses have been received from statutory agencies, local organisations and members of the public, containing 57 separate comments for consideration. A summary of the respondents and their comments is contained within Appendix 1.
- 3.2 Most of those who responded were concerned with the proposed boundary, rather than the nature of the Character Assessment or Management Plan. The majority of the respondents were in favour of the new boundaries, although three asked for modifications to be considered (responses 3; 7; &10). Two of the respondents objected to the extension of the boundaries where this was perceived to adversely affect their clients' property (responses 8 & 9). All responses from local residents were in favour (responses 11 to 17).
- 3.3 Most responses, where justified, have lead to modifications of the boundaries as proposed in the Boundary Review Document and a revised draft of this document has been prepared for consideration by Cabinet (Appendix 2). There have been two significant modifications to the boundaries as originally proposed. The first, after representations by English Heritage, has occurred to tighten the boundaries to the east and west of the Great Whyte. The second is an extension south of Bury church to include an area of archaeological significance related to the early history of that place, which is supported by the Cambridgeshire Archaeological Service.
- 3.4 Limited comments were received in relation to the Management Plan, which was generally considered to indicate a positive approach to the enhancement of the Conservation Area. Some respondents questioned the limited information provided behind each project heading. In fact, the Plan is, at this stage, only a list of proposals that will be developed in conjunction with local groups. Where appropriate, further project work within the Management Plan will be subject to separate consultation and approval by Cabinet.
- 3.5 On 25th July 2005, the Development Control Panel supported, in principle, the proposals set out in the original draft Boundary Review Document, Character Assessment and Management Plan.
- 3.6 If Cabinet agrees to adopt the revisions to the boundary, appropriate notices will be advertised in accordance with the provisions of section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

#### **4. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 That the Cabinet considers the responses to comments presented in Appendix 1 and agrees to:
1. Designate the proposed Ramsey Conservation Area according to the boundary in the revised Ramsey Boundary Review document, incorporating the specified changes (Appendix 2);
  2. Adopt the revised Ramsey Conservation Area Character Assessment (as previously circulated) with the amendments contained in Appendix 3 of this paper, which will become a material consideration in planning decisions.
  3. Adopt the Ramsey Conservation Area Management Plan as a set of proposals for the enhancement of the Conservation Area and as a basis for further discussion and project work.
  4. Authorize the Head of Planning Services to make any minor consequential amendments to the text and illustrations necessary as a result of these changes, after consultation with the Executive Member for Planning Strategy.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

1. Conservation Area Boundary Review Policy Document, Huntingdonshire District Council, January 2003.

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