

HARBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO THE CABINET MEETING OF 7 February 2022

PUBLIC REPORT: Y /-N

EXEMPT REPORT: ~~Y~~ / N

Report Title	Shearsby Conservation Area Appraisal
KEY DECISION	N
Report Author	Sally Hartshorne, Heritage and Conservation Officer
Purpose of Report	To seek approval of Cabinet for the Shearsby Conservation Area Appraisal and to recommend it to Council for adoption.
Reason for Decision	To enable the Cabinet to consider the content of the Shearsby Conservation Area Appraisal and recommend it to Council for adoption.
Portfolio (holder)	Cllr Bateman – Portfolio Holder for Planning & Infrastructure and Heritage Champion
Corporate Priorities	HDC's ' Corporate Plan 2019-2021 ' and the related 'Corporate Delivery Plan 2019-2021' set out the Council's aspirations for the district over the next three years, what its priorities are and how it will deliver them. This contributes to two priorities: <i>The place:</i> An enterprising and vibrant place. CO1, CO4. <i>The people:</i> A healthy, inclusive and vibrant community. CO5, CO6.
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications.
Risk Management Implications	The risk of not undertaking Conservation Area Appraisals would be the lack of recognition and potential loss of a heritage asset which is valued by residents and is part of the unique historic environment of the District.
Environmental Implications	This document relates to the historic environment of the District and so has positive implications for the historic environment
Legal Implications	The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires local planning authorities, from time to time, to review existing conservation areas (section 69) and to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas and consult the public in the area in question, taking account of views expressed (section 71).
Equality Implications	This document relates to the historic environment which benefits all residents, businesses and visitors.
Data Protection Implications	None as far as this report is concerned

Consultation	The public consultation on Shearsby Conservation Area Appraisal ran from 8 July to 5 September 2021. A drop in event was held in Shearsby Village Hall on 5 August.
Options	<p>Option 1 – Cabinet approves the Shearsby Conservation Area Appraisal and recommends it to Council for adoption.</p> <p>Option 2 – not to approve the Shearsby Conservation Area Appraisal and not to recommend it to Council for adoption would potentially fail to meet the obligation to review existing conservation areas as required by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as detailed above. It would also fail to recognise the contribution of local heritage to the making of place and the value it has within the lives of people living, working and visiting the district.</p>
Background Papers	N/A
Recommendation	<p>1) That the Cabinet approves the Shearsby Conservation Area Appraisal, attached at Appendix A,</p> <p>2) That Cabinet recommend to Council that the Shearsby Conservation Area Appraisal be adopted.</p>

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Within the Harborough District there are 1281 Listed Buildings, 6 Historic Parks & Gardens, 65 Scheduled Monuments and 63 Conservation Areas; all of which are designated heritage assets and protected through national legislation.
- 1.2 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’. Although conservation areas are protected by national legislation, they are designated at a local level to ensure that they reflect and protect the cherished local scene.
- 1.3 The conservation areas within the district were last appraised between 2005 and 2007. As such, a programme of appraisal has been put in place to ensure the conservation areas remain up-to-date and supported by appropriate appraisals. Due to the high number of conservation areas within the district, this will be an ongoing work programme. Shearsby has been used as a pilot for the methodology to be used in the appraisal of the district’s conservation areas.
- 1.4 Shearsby was awarded conservation area designation in 1975, European Architectural Heritage Year. The European Architectural Heritage initiative,

which ran from 1972 to 1975, encouraged people to recognise the value of their local environment. Shearsby residents engaged in this initiative in the early 1970s, which contributed to designation of the conservation area. A boundary amendment was made in 1994 and the conservation area was last re-appraised in 2005.

2.0 Key Facts

2.1 The concept of 'conservation areas' was first introduced by the Civic Amenities Act 1967 which defined a conservation area as 'an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.' Conservation area designation is not intended to prevent change but to manage change in ways that maintain and strengthen an area's special qualities. The definition remains unchanged in current legislation, set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The Act places duties on local planning authorities to:

- Identify those parts of their area that are of special architectural or historic interest and to designate them as conservation areas;
- Review past designations from time to time;
- Prepare proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas:
- Pay special attention to the desirability of preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of conservation areas when determining planning applications for sites within areas.

2.2 Conservation area status must be justified on the grounds of the special architectural or historic interest of the area. The purpose of this appraisal is to define and record the factors that give Shearsby conservation area its special interest and justify its designation. This will help improve understanding of the historic importance of the area, how this has shaped its unique character and how it can guide its future development. The appraisal will help inform the consideration of relevant planning applications, conservation area and listed building consents as appropriate. There are no proposals to amend the existing conservation area boundary.

2.3 Methodology and approach to undertaking conservation area appraisals was formulated from desk-based examination of the conservation area documentation produced by other authorities – Leicester and Leicestershire authorities, Derbyshire Dales, Birmingham, Herefordshire, Newcastle and Oxford and articles on the experience of approaching conservation area appraisal and management in *Context* and *Town Planning Review*. A meeting was held with Daventry District Council to discuss their conservation area review process which has been ongoing for three years. It has also been informed by Civic Voice's 'Big Conservation Conversation' initiative and

Historic England Guidance Note 1 – *Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management* (2019).

- 2.4 The Shearsby appraisal was undertaken between late summer 2020 to early spring 2021. As a result, the work took place under the restrictions imposed to fight the Covid 19 pandemic. As such initial plans for public engagement and historical research needed to respond to changing circumstances. The Parish Council resources were stretched during that time and engagement with the work was through a nominated resident who was able to supply some background historical information. With limited access to libraries and archives, usual historic sources were unavailable, so this information was used alongside online sources.
- 2.5 The public consultation on Shearsby Conservation Area Appraisal took place between 8 July and 5 September 2021. A drop in event was held in partnership with Shearsby Parish Council in Shearsby Village Hall on 5 August. In addition to display boards illustrating the special architectural and historic interest of the conservation area, copies of the appraisal document were available. The Heritage and Conservation Officer and the Parish Liaison Officer were present to answer any queries. Approximately 20 people attended the event, including the Parish Councillors. The responses to the consultation are set out in Appendix B.

Summary of Shearsby Conservation Area Appraisal

- 2.6 The purpose of this appraisal is to define and record the factors that give Shearsby conservation area its special interest and justify its designation. This will help improve understanding of the historic importance of the area, how this has shaped its unique character and how it can guide its future development. The document (Appendix A) presents this information using the following format:
- Map of Shearsby Conservation Area
 - Summary of Special Interest
 - Introduction
 - Policy and Legislation
 - Living and Working in a Conservation Area
 - Character, Location and Uses
 - Definition of Special Interest
 - Historical Development
 - Assessment of Special Interest
 - Opportunities for Enhancement
 - Management Plan
- 2.7 The appraisal included undertaking a review of the existing Shearsby Conservation Area boundary. It has confirmed the appropriateness of the existing boundary. Although suggestions for boundary changes were received, the appraisal did not find any special architectural or historic evidence to justify amendment at this time. This can be reviewed if appropriate evidence becomes available.

- 2.8 Shearsby is a traditional farming village. Much of its historic character comes from the relationship of farms and fields to the traditional housing and other buildings which form the settlement. The Draft Shearsby Conservation Area Appraisal (set out at Appendix A) sets out a summary of the special interest of the conservation area which is derived from the following key characteristics:
- a. The medieval settlement pattern
 - b. The secluded, tranquil character of the village located within a dip and surrounded by the hilly South Leicestershire countryside
 - c. The strong agricultural character of the village and the relationship of the fields and farms to the traditional housing and other buildings
 - d. The use of thatch, brick and slate for buildings, especially for traditional housing and farm buildings
 - e. The relationship between the built environment of the settlement and the natural environment both within it and surrounding it
 - f. The public footpaths which relate the village to its hinterland and provide connectivity to nearby settlements.

2.9 The Draft Shearsby Conservation Area Appraisal provides a detailed description of the historical development and the unique character of the conservation area. It highlights the continued importance of Shearsby's agricultural heritage to the character of the conservation area. It describes the contribution certain buildings have made to the development of the settlement over time. Shearsby conforms to Natural England's description of rural villages in south Leicestershire whose settlement patterns formed in medieval times and remain evident with, 'separate villages clustered around a tall church spire, and have a long history of agricultural land use. Shearsby is a good example of a medieval settlement plan within its countryside setting. The development of Shearsby is intertwined with the farmland that surrounds it. This is evident in the relationship between the farms, fields and traditional housing and farm buildings. The relationship between the built environment of the settlement and the natural environment both within it and surrounding it are integral to its rural character which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.

Implementation of the Shearsby Conservation Area Appraisal

2.10 The appraisal provides descriptions of both the setting of the conservation area and the buildings and natural environment within it which are of particular significance to the special interest of Shearsby and its historic character. These are supported by photographic and historical sources of evidence to provide greater understanding of the historic development of the settlement and to guide the determination of relevant planning applications. Such detail will help those submitting and those assessing planning applications to understand the historic importance of the area, how this has shaped its unique character and how it can

guide its future development. The appraisal will help inform the consideration of relevant planning applications, conservation area and listed building consents as appropriate.

3.0 Conclusion and Next Steps

- 3.1 The Shearsby Conservation Area Appraisal has undergone public consultation, including a drop-in event in Shearsby Village Hall. The results of which did not produce the need for any amendments to the appraisal. The Shearsby Conservation Area Appraisal is recommended for approval by Cabinet with a view to recommendation to Council for adoption.