

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

RECORD OF DECISION OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION

Decision Made: 12 March 2010

LINTON CONSERVATION AREA: MANAGEMENT PLAN

Issue for Decision

To agree the management plan for Linton Conservation Area

Decision Made

That the text of the Conservation Area Management Plan for Linton Conservation Area, as amended after consultation, and attached as Appendix A to the report of the Assistant Director of Development and Community Strategy, be approved for adoption and publication subject to minor editorial amendments to be made, if required, by the Assistant Director of Development and Community Strategy.

Reasons for Decision

The original draft of the Management Plan for Linton Conservation Area was approved for consultation purposes by the Cabinet Member on 17th December 2009 and was the subject of consultation in accordance with the aims of the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement. This included the following bodies and individuals:-

- English Heritage
- Kent County Council
- Linton Parish Council
- Boughton Monchelsea Parish Council
- Ward Member/s
- The Campaign to Protect Rural England
- Other relevant organizations with an interest in the particular area, e.g. Linton Park Plc.

In addition, a copy was placed on the Borough Council's website and a press release placed in the Kent Messenger. Copies were also deposited at Maidstone, Springfield and Coxheath Libraries and at The Gateway, the latter accompanied by a display. A drop-in session was held at The Gateway on 25th January. Internal consultations were carried out with the development control section.

A meeting was held with the Parish Council on 28th January followed by a public meeting at Linton Village Hall on the evening of 9th February. Approximately 40 members of the public attended the latter and a lively debate was held. This mostly concentrated on the questions of boundary alterations and the main views elicited on the night may be summarized as general support for the document and for proposals to extend the Conservation Area to include Linton Park, but very strong opposition to proposals to omit Vicarage Field from the Conservation Area.

Subsequently nine written responses have been received in addition to verbal comments made at the public meeting. Six of these came from local residents, the others being from the Parish Council, Linton Park Plc and the Kent branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England.

Comments were virtually exclusively concerned with boundary changes. The various issues, together with my comments and proposed responses, are summarised below.

Linton Park Extension. Six respondents positively supported the proposals to include Linton Park in the Conservation Area, including Linton Park Plc. Three of these also suggested that Linton School in Heath Road (which occupies part of the former parkland) and Loddington House and the adjacent farm buildings (now converted to residential use) which lie on the eastern side of Loddington Lane but were formerly associated with Linton Park should also be included. My view in respect of Linton School remains that it should not be included as the character of the site has changed and therefore I do not propose to change the Management Plan in this respect. However, Loddington House is a fine, large Victorian building of ragstone, and the collection of former agricultural buildings, including an oasthouse, constitute an attractive vernacular group; it is therefore now suggested that their inclusion in an extended Conservation Area would be appropriate.

Wheeler's Lane Four respondents specifically supported this proposal, and there were no objections to it. Six letters asked for the inclusion of the allotments on the north side of the lane, and two also suggested that the whole of the north side as far as Cornwallis Avenue be included. The north side of the lane has been re-evaluated, but it is not proposed to recommend it for inclusion. The allotments are an open area of no historic or architectural interest where conservation area controls over demolition of buildings and protection of trees would bring no additional benefits. Built development consists of a house, Swallowfield, in substantial grounds, which appears to date from the late 1930s but is not of any particular architectural interest, and a mix of late 20th Century bungalows and houses of no merit.

Vicarage Field Currently the boundary of the Conservation Area runs through the middle of this open field and does not follow any logical boundary. As part of the boundary review it seemed appropriate to address this issue to give a more visible and defensible boundary to the Conservation Area. Given that Conservation Area designation is not generally considered appropriate for open land (paragraph 4.6 of PPG15 states that designation is not likely to be appropriate to protect landscape features with the specific exception of historic parks and gardens) the Consultation Draft proposed removal of this section of the field from the Conservation Area. However, strong opposition to this proposal was evident at the public meeting and every letter received subsequently has echoed this opposition. I remain of the opinion that a boundary change here would be advantageous, but in the light of strong feelings expressed it is now suggested that the boundary be extended to include the whole field. Whilst this would bring little in the way of additional control or protection for this land, paragraph 4.6 of PPG15 does acknowledge that the inclusion of areas forming the setting for buildings forming the heart of a conservation area can be considered appropriate.

The sole other concern, voiced by one local resident, relates to a suggestion that consideration be given to a reduction in the use of white lines on the highway; however, this forms part of a package of highway management suggestions which are to be the subject of further study and consultation and no alteration to the Management Plan is proposed in this respect.

A point raised by a number of people at the public meeting and reiterated in three of the letters subsequently received relates to the time period allowed for consultation, which was considered to be too short. The time period as originally allowed was the same three weeks as given in respect of all other consultations regarding Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans. In fact additional time has already been granted to Linton in order to allow for arrangement of the public meeting and the Parish Council meeting. I remain of the view that the level of attendance at the public meeting and the number of written responses received indicates that sufficient opportunity has been given for comment, particularly given the relatively narrow range of issues which have been raised. All the formal changes that flow from the Management Plan will themselves be the subject of further public consultation.

Summary of Key Proposals

Key proposals of the Management Plan include

- Two major extensions of the Conservation Area to encompass Linton Park/ Loddington House and part of Wheeler's Lane.
- The introduction of an Article 4 Direction.
- Enhancement works including dealing with intrusive Wirescape and traffic management.

All of these elements will require separate procedural steps and will be subject to further consultation, with the aim of completing this programme over the next 24 months.

Alternatives considered and why rejected

The alternative would be not to approve the Management Plan for adoption and publication. However, following this course of action would mean that the Council was not complying with national guidance and best practice.

Background Papers

609/123/01 – Linton Conservation Area
Linton Conservation Area Appraisal

Should you be concerned about this decision and wish to call it in, please submit a call in form signed by any two Non-Executive Members to the Head of Change and Scrutiny by: 19 March 2010
--