

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**RECORD OF DECISION OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING,
INFRASTRUCTURE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Decision Made: 12 January 2024

Staplehurst Conservation Appraisal and Management Plan

Issue for Decision

To seek approval of the Staplehurst Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAAMP) for public consultation and explore the following workstreams in accordance with the CAAMP: An Article 4 Direction, Design Code centred on the Staplehurst Conservation Area and the extension of the Staplehurst Conservation Area boundaries.

Decision Made

That:

1. The Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan for Staplehurst Conservation Area be approved for public consultation;
2. Delegated powers be given to the Head of Development Management to undertake the necessary statutory requirements to undertake public consultation for the Staplehurst Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan; and
3. The following work streams be explored (in accordance with the draft CAAMP report attached at Appendix 1):
 - a. An Article 4 Direction
 - b. A Design code centred on the Staplehurst Conservation Area
 - c. Extending the boundaries of the Staplehurst Conservation Area

Reasons for Decision

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires local authorities to review their Conservation Areas from time to time to consider whether they should be amended, are still worthy of being designated and the possibility of revising their boundaries and to identify changes and pressures which may affect the original reasons for their designation.

In order that informed decisions can be made on planning applications, it is important to identify the special character of Conservation Areas which are proposed for preservation and enhancement. The Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan allows for an informed decision to be made by recognising the character of the Conservation Area and providing a framework of actions. Staplehurst was first designated in November 1987 and the boundary had not been reviewed since that time.

The Management Plan sets out a framework for conserving, enhancing, and

managing development in the Staplehurst Conservation Area to ensure that it retains its special qualities as required by the Conservation Area designation under section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. A new Management Plan would fulfil the Council's duty to prepare proposals for the preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas. Failure to approve the Management Plan would mean that this duty was not observed.

The first part of the document, the Appraisal, identifies the key elements which combine to produce the special historic and architectural interest of the Conservation Area and considers how they interact and impact upon one another and explains how the area has developed into their current form. It seeks to identify pressures and developments which threaten the special character of the Conservation Area, and sites and features which detract from the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The clear understanding of the Area's qualities provided in the appraisal offers information to guide future policies and improvements as well as providing a framework against which decisions on individual planning proposals may be assessed. This is further elaborated upon, in the second part of the document: the management plan.

Resulting from the findings of the Appraisal, the Management Plan contains proposals to preserve or enhance Staplehurst Conservation Area. The document includes the policy background to the management plan, principles for development control, and, where appropriate, suggested boundary alterations. It also contains information on review and good practice procedures. It would provide a stronger base for development management decisions in resisting inappropriate developments by providing a good understanding of the character of the area, including the architecture and material palette to enable good design for future development or proposed changes. The creation of the Management Plan will ensure that development retains or enhances the character of the Conservation Area.

As part of the review process, the existing Conservation Area boundary was deemed to be appropriate. Consideration was undertaken to include Iden Manor (and parts of its former Estate, such as The Quarter) to the south of the existing Conservation Area but this was considered to be at low risk of development and would constrain the NHS who currently occupy/own the site. Consideration was also undertaken to extend the boundary to the north to include the Victorian Villas and terraces, but due to the piecemeal alterations and infill development, this was not considered to reach the special architectural or historic interest requirements.

Many Conservation Areas are subject to Article 4 Directives to protect the character of the CA. Staplehurst currently does not have any Art. 4 Directives, and as part of the review process, it is currently not recommending implementing any. This will be reviewed again following the public consultation.

At present there is no Design Code for Staplehurst. Some guidance has been provided within the CAAMP and there is some guidance commissioned by the Parish Council. The creation of a solid Design Code should be considered within the near future to provide additional support to protect the character of the Conservation Area and its setting.

The Staplehurst Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAAMP) has been written in accordance with guidelines set down by Historic England and the

National Planning Policy Framework (2023). This has been drafted for Cabinet Member approval to enable a consultation process to be carried out in accordance with the Planning Act 1990 requirements under section 71(2). This will include the following bodies and individuals:

- a) Historic England
- b) Kent County Council Heritage Unit
- c) Ward Members
- d) Staplehurst Parish Council
- e) Any other relevant organizations with an interest in Staplehurst

In addition, copies will be placed on the Borough Council website and in the local library. A formal notice will be published in the London Gazette and a local newspaper (KM), as per the Planning Act 1990 requirements under section 70(8) and there will also be a press release. This should ensure that the combined Appraisal and Management plan documents are brought to the attention of the local public.

The matter was considered by the Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee on 10 January 2024, with support expressed for the report recommendations.

Alternatives considered and why rejected

That the recommendations of the report are not approved.

This option was rejected, as support was expressed for the Staplehurst Conservation Appraisal and Management Plan attached at Appendix 1 to the report, with the Parish Council and relevant Ward Members having been consulted. If not approved there is a risk that Maidstone Borough Council are failing to comply with the requirements of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Area) Act 1990

Background Papers

None.

I have read and approved the above decision for the reasons (including possible alternative options rejected) as set out above.



Signed: _____
Councillor Paul Cooper, Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development

Full details of both the report for the decision taken above and any consideration by the relevant Policy Advisory Committee can be found at the following area of the [website](#)

Call-In: Should you be concerned about this decision and wish to call it in, please submit a call-in form signed by any three Members to the Proper Officer by: **5pm on Friday 19 January 2024.**