

Committee:	Planning	Agenda Item No.:	9
Date:	9 th December 2009	Category	*
Subject:	Old Blackwell Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan - Start of Public Participation	Status	Open
Report by:	Heritage Conservation Manager (written by Conservation Officer (Conservation Area Appraisals))		
Other Officers involved:			
Director	Director of Development		
Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cabinet Member for the Environment		

RELEVANT CORPORATE AIMS

Environment - Promoting and enhancing a clean and sustainable environment.

One of the Council's priorities for its aim for the environment is to protect, enhance and improve the natural and built environment in a sustainable way.

The proposed Old Blackwell Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan seeks to ensure that the historic and natural environment of the Old Blackwell Conservation Area is preserved and enhanced by defining its special character and appearance and by setting out appropriate policies and proposals. As a result, the proposed Old Blackwell Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan will form an extremely important policy tool in the Council's efforts to protect and enhance the built and natural environment in a sustainable way.

TARGETS

Achieving the milestones set in the Historic Environment Scheme by March 2011 is a specific target in the Corporate Plan. Within this target, preparing and adopting the Old Blackwell Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan by April 2010 will achieve one of the milestones.

VALUE FOR MONEY

Preparing and adopting Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans aids efforts for a more efficient planning determination process as the additional guidance they contain enables applicants to better prepare their proposals, which in turn reduces the need for amendments, and enables the district to gain better developments.

In addition to this, the proposals for enhancement that the Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans contain aids efforts to secure external funding for the district.

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To seek Committee approval to carry out a public participation exercise on the draft Old Blackwell Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan and the proposed extension to the boundary of the conservation area.

THE REPORT

Background Information

Members will be aware that the process for the preparation of Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans was set down in the Historic Environment Scheme (as amended October 2009).

This process involves the following stages:

- Stage 1 - Evidence gathering
- Stage 2 - Prepare draft document
- Stage 3 - Public participation
- Stage 4 - Prepare final document

Stages 1 and 2 of the process have been completed, with the stakeholder (local experts) meeting held at the Newton Community Centre, Main Street, Newton on 22nd October 2009. The main issues raised were:

- The age of the settlement and the number of buildings of historical or architectural interest, including the parish church of St Werburgh
- It was suggested that the conservation area should be extended to the south of the church to include the extended graveyard and three mature lime trees
- A number of traffic and highway issues were raised, particularly the speed of traffic passing through the settlement

- It was suggested that the existing street lighting and paved surfaces should be replaced with lighting and surfacing more in keeping with the character of the area
- Concerns raised about the possible removal of the red telephone kiosk and post box on Huthwaite Lane
- Possible replacement tree planting in the churchyard

Appendix 1 contains a list of attendees and the note of the meeting.

ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Conservation Area boundary issues

The Old Blackwell Conservation Area was designated by the Council in 1978 and the boundary has remained unchanged since. The boundary was established to recognise primarily the special historic and architectural interest of the area, but the draft Appraisal also highlights the contribution of the rural and relatively undeveloped setting of the conservation area.

It was suggested at the stakeholder meeting by local residents that the conservation area should be extended to the south of the church to include an area of land that has been incorporated into the burial ground since the conservation area was designated. The land was gifted to the church in the 1990s.

An assessment of the area has been undertaken as part of the review of the conservation area. The area of the burial ground lies to the south of St Werburgh's Church on ground which slopes to the south towards Hilcote Lane. Part of the site is laid out with formal paths and a number of memorial seats. The area is surrounded by agricultural fields and is delineated by both traditional boundary walls and more recently planted hawthorn hedgerows and wooden fencing. This area of land currently straddles the conservation area boundary therefore creating an anomaly in that part of the extended burial ground lies inside the conservation area and the other part lies outside. There is no discernible difference in character between the two areas.

The proposed extension area also includes three mature lime trees which are covered by Tree Preservation Order (TPO BOL/24). The trees are known as the 'Three Sisters' and are considered to be a significant and valuable amenity feature on the approach to the church along the public footpath from Hilcote Lane.

The proposed extension to the Old Blackwell Conservation Area is shown on the Features of Interest plan in the draft Appraisal and Management Plan and has been incorporated into the conservation area appraisal and management plan for consideration.

Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan issues

The draft Old Blackwell Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan seeks to define the special character and appearance of the Old Blackwell Conservation Area by assessing the built form, landscape and streetscape value. It also provides guidance on the implementation of certain saved policies in the Bolsover District Local Plan and where appropriate proposes schemes for the preservation and enhancement of the conservation area.

In the preparation of the draft document, the issues raised at the stakeholder meeting have been considered and where appropriate incorporated in the draft document.

Based on this background, the proposed draft Old Blackwell Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan identifies a number of preservation proposals, such as seeking to preserve the special historic and architectural interest of a number of buildings in the conservation area. The document also identifies a number of enhancement schemes, including improvements to the public realm and investigating measures to tackle the impact of traffic on the village.

In considering when the proposed schemes for the preservation and enhancement of the conservation area should take place, regard has been paid to the Council's approved Historic Environment Scheme Work Programme.

Therefore, it is considered that the preservation proposals contained in the draft Old Blackwell Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, such as tackling the buildings and structures identified as in need of both urgent and non-urgent repairs, can progress alongside programmed work and the consultation exercise.

The enhancement proposals, which are generally less urgent than preservation proposals, given that they pose less immediate threat to the conservation area, are considered to be desirable but not able to be delivered in the current programme without additional resources.

A copy of the draft document is contained at Appendix 2.

Next stage

Following consideration of these issues and preparation of a draft Old Blackwell Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, it is proposed to progress to Stage 3, with a five week public participation exercise due to the Christmas break, commencing on Monday 14th December 2009 until Friday 15th January 2010. A public meeting will be held during this period.

The outcome of the public participation exercise, stating how the responses have been considered and where necessary incorporated into the document,

Note of Meeting

Old Blackwell Conservation Area
Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan

Local Stakeholders' Meeting

Venue: Newton Community Centre, Main Street, Newton
Time: 6pm – 7.30pm
Date: 22nd October 2009

Present:

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Organisation</u>
1	D Smith		Resident
2	M & E Oldershaw		TPS Estates
3	M J Corbishley	Verger	St Werburgh's Church PCC
4	Reverend G Manley	Vicar	St Werburgh's Church, Diocese of Derby
5	L E Hounsell		St Werburgh's Church
6	R & D Coates		Residents
7	A Tomlinson	Councillor	Bolsover District Council and Blackwell Parish Council
8	I Newham	Councillor	Blackwell Parish Council
9	A & J Layton		Residents
10	M & J Thompson		Residents
11	E & S Franklin		Residents
12	R & S Stones		Residents
13	Chris McKinney	Heritage Conservation Manager	Bolsover District Council
14	Jonathan Moore	Conservation Officer (CAA)	Bolsover District Council

Note Prepared by: Jonathan Moore

		ACTION
1.0	Introduction	
1.1	Chris McKinney opened the meeting and set out the background to the Council's Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan programme. He explained that the Council aimed to produce an Appraisal and Management Plan for each of the 27 conservation areas in the district and that the Old Blackwell Conservation Area was the thirteenth in the current programme. He also explained that the purpose of the meeting was to meet with local stakeholders, such as local representatives and residents, at an early stage in the process.	
1.2	Jonathan Moore then outlined the process for producing conservation area appraisal and management plans. Copies of adopted appraisal and management plans were provided for the group to look at and then he explained how the document would be structured.	
1.3	Jonathan explained that the stakeholder meeting was an opportunity to gather information about the history of the local area and to identify features that are important to the character and appearance of the settlement. He stressed that the knowledge of people who live and work in the area was extremely useful to the Council.	
1.4	He also outlined that it was important to identify any threats to the character and appearance of the conservation area, as well as opportunities to improve and enhance the conservation area. He explained that information from the meeting would help to develop the focus of the Appraisal and feed into drafting Management Plan actions and enhancement schemes.	
2.0	Characteristics	JM
2.1	Jonathan explained that the character of an area is derived both from the built heritage and the natural environment. The Appraisal would comprise an assessment of not just the buildings and other important built features, but also features such as open spaces, the local topography, mature trees, hedgerows and boundary treatments. Views into, from and within conservation areas are also often judged to be important.	
2.2	He then gave a <i>précis</i> of the history of Old Blackwell. Despite not being recorded in the Domesday Book (1086) it is considered to be a very old settlement, probably with Saxon origins. A Saxon cross in the churchyard has been dated 7 th or 8 th century and the church is dedicated to a Saxon abbess (St Werburgh) who died in 699AD. The church is likely to have been altered by the Normans and substantial rebuilding took place in the 1820s followed by further work in the 1870s. The church became part of the Diocese of Derby in 1927.	

- 2.3 The name Blackwell is thought to mean 'dark spring'. Mrs Hounsell said that she recalled the term 'black brook' also having been used locally. Jonathan mentioned that Church Hill was referred to in some historical records as 'Sinai' - several residents verified this. It was also mentioned that there was a salt hole at Craig House.
- 2.4 Jonathan identified that there are 3 listed buildings in the village – the church, Old Farm Cottage, and Three Lane Ends Farmhouse. Also listed is a double tombstone in the churchyard dating from 1734. Apart from the church, the oldest buildings are the farms which date predominantly from the 18th and 19th century, although earlier buildings may have existed. Residents identified that Devonshire Cottage is another old building and it was agreed that Craig House is very old.
- 2.5 Jonathan explained that the Appraisal would also identify other buildings which make a positive contribution to the special interest of Old Blackwell. These would be categorised as Unlisted Buildings of Merit. He asked the group to think about which buildings they considered to be important. Residents stated that the collection of buildings overall were important and that the village was 'like a jigsaw'. Removal of any piece could spoil the overall value of the place.
- 2.6 Jonathan then identified that there are a few buildings in the village dating from the 19th century, for example the former school and public house, which followed the development of the collieries and railways in the area. Unlike many other settlements Old Blackwell has retained much of its traditional rural/agricultural character and residents were agreed that this was an important characteristic.
- 2.7 Mr Coates highlighted that there was an important connection between Jedediah Strutt and Three Lane Ends Farm – Strutt had inherited the farm from one of his uncles and lived there prior to inventing the Derby Rib machine. Chris stated that a lot of information about Jedediah Strutt had come to light when he had been preparing the Appraisal for the Newton Conservation Area in 2001/02 and there was a strong local connection.
- 2.8 Jonathan then questioned the group about the former railway line which had been opened in 1892 by the Great Central Railway. Councillor Tomlinson confirmed that the line had been closed in the 1960s under the Beeching reforms. Jonathan asked whether there was public access to the route - residents stated that although it had been filled in it was used as an informal footpath. Some residents said it would be desirable to try and develop the route into an amenity trail which could link into other trails in the district.
- 2.9 Jonathan then referred to the original public house which had been

- situated to the east of the railway line and was known locally as 'The Thack' on account of its thatched roof. This was replaced by the later 'Robin Hood' pub, which has now closed. Some concern was raised by residents about use of the property as the base for a taxi service.
- 2.10 Jonathan then mentioned Church Hill Farm and explained that this was a known area of archaeological interest – he identified it on a plan of the village. He asked whether anyone knew if a manorial boundary marker still existed – this marked the boundary between land owned by the Duke of Devonshire and the Earl of Carnarvon.
- 2.11 There was some speculation that it did still exist although no-one could confirm this. Jonathan advised that there was also archaeological evidence of a remnant ditch and medieval strip fields around the farm and that the site could have been the location of the former manor house.
- 2.12 The residents agreed that there are a lot of mature trees in the conservation area and that these add to the character of the place. Some concerns were voiced about the removal of several horse chestnut trees in the churchyard due to disease and the lack of replacement planting. There then followed some discussion about the merits of planting trees in churchyards and the problems they can cause through root damage was highlighted by Reverend Manley. It was suggested that this might be an area where replacement planting might take place but some reservations were voiced and it was agreed that further discussion would be needed. Chris explained that the Council operated a Free Tree Scheme and that this perhaps provided an opportunity to source trees if planting was considered to be desirable. Mr Franklin suggested that an area of land to the south of the church containing three mature trees should be included in the conservation area. He marked these on a plan.
- 2.13 Mr Layton referred to the rural nature of Old Blackwell and the importance of views from and into the conservation area. He considered that these views were appreciated and should be protected and asked whether the conservation area should be extended to include additional landscape. Chris explained the rationale and considerations used when designating conservation areas and stated that the District Council had taken the approach of generally drawing conservation area boundaries relatively tightly around settlements – the approach varies between local authorities. He also explained that Old Blackwell is defined in the Bolsover District Local Plan as a rural settlement and the Council has policies in place which effectively limit the level and types of development that the Council would consider suitable outside the settlement framework.
- 2.14 Residents identified that the red telephone box on Cragg Lane was an important feature and suggested it should be protected by listing.

- Chris explained that the District Council had applied to English Heritage to have the box listed but this had been declined as the box did not fulfil the listing criteria. However, he added that the importance of the phone box stated by the residents had been noted and would inform the Appraisal.
- 2.15 Councillor Tomlinson then explained that the Parish Council had recently been consulted by BT about its 'Adopt a Kiosk' scheme. The Parish Council had decided not to pursue the option as it believed BT should continue to be responsible for maintaining the telephone service. There was then some discussion about the merits of the telephone box and residents considered it important that it be retained. Jonathan explained that the District Council had also been consulted by BT on its proposals for several telephone boxes in the district. He stated that the Council would be considering a report in November which would provide recommendations on each. He stated that it would be likely that officers would be recommending that the Council object to the removal of the telephone box at Cragg Lane.
- 2.16 Residents also thought that the post box on Cragg Lane and wooden bus shelter were important features that should be retained. Councillor Tomlinson stated that the bus shelter was owned by the Parish Council. Mr and Mrs Thompson suggested that the bus shelter should be moved as changes to the local bus route meant that the shelter was now in the wrong place and effectively redundant.
- 2.17 There was then some discussion about the former school site and its conversion to residential units. Mr and Mrs Oldershaw clarified how many units had been built and it was agreed that the Council and the developer had between them achieved a development scheme that had benefited the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- 3.0 Boundaries and potential extensions**
- 3.1 Jonathan explained that the Old Blackwell Conservation Area was designated in 1978 and that the boundary had not been reviewed since designation. He explained that the process allows the Council to review conservation area boundaries - to look at proposed extensions, as well as possible deletions in cases where the special interest of the conservation area has been eroded. He outlined that in considering possible extensions to a conservation area an assessment would need to be carried out to determine whether the area was worthy of designation on the basis of its historic and/or architectural interest.
- 3.2 Mr Franklin questioned why the current conservation area did not include the small area of land to the south of St Werburgh's church which includes 3 mature trees and now forms part of the graveyard. This area was identified on a plan for clarification.

JM

3.3 Jonathan suggested that because the extension to the graveyard is more recent than the designation of the conservation area this was the reason the boundaries did not match. Jonathan and Chris stated that this anomaly would be looked at as part of the review process.

3.4 No other boundary changes were suggested.

4.0 Identification of possible threats to character and appearance

JM

4.1 Residents raised several issues relating to the impact of traffic travelling through Old Blackwell. Mrs Layton stated that as pavements are limited and the roads narrow this discourages people from walking along them. The speed limit has recently been reduced from the national speed limit to 40mph, although several residents stated that this was regularly ignored. It was suggested that the speed limit should be reduced further to 30mph and traffic calming measures introduced.

4.2 Chris explained that concerns about traffic issues were a common theme coming across at a number of previous stakeholder meetings. He explained that although the District Council is not the Highway Authority, the appraisal and management plan process was proving useful in exposing problem areas. As a result, the Council had met with the County Council to draw this issue to their attention and to try to facilitate the redirection of traffic. Chris added that the problems raised today would feed into those discussions.

4.3 Mr Layton raised the issue of the M1 motorway being widened to four lanes between junctions 28 and 29 and asked whether additional lighting was likely to be installed as has happened elsewhere. Chris talked about the pros and cons of motorway development and the requirements of lighting for safety reasons. The concerns of residents about the motorway widening were noted.

4.4 Residents were in agreement that the possible loss of the telephone box on Cragg Lane is a threat to the character and appearance of the conservation area. It was stated that the phone box is currently not well maintained. Equally, it was considered that the post box and bus shelter should be retained.

4.5 Mr Coates said that cars park in the lay-by opposite St Werburgh's Church in the evenings and there is regular littering as a result. He suggested some sensitive lighting might help discourage people from parking there in the evenings.

5.0 Identification of possible opportunities to enhance character and appearance

JM

- 5.1 Residents considered that road traffic measures to reduce the speed of traffic and the volume of heavy goods vehicles would help to enhance the conservation area. It was stressed that any measures should be sensitive to the character of the conservation area.
- 5.2 In addition, some residents considered that the street lighting in Old Blackwell should be replaced with new lights that are more in keeping with the character of the area. It was clarified that this should be replacement lighting rather than additional lighting.
- 5.3 It was also suggested that the conservation area would benefit from improved paved surfaces that are in keeping with the character of the area.
- 5.4 Mr Thompson asked if any EU funding would be available to fund these improvements. Chris explained that a number of funding streams currently exist and that the Council had been successful in obtaining funding for other projects elsewhere in the district. He added that the purpose of identifying enhancement schemes was to improve the chance of securing funding, given that most funders wanted to know that the local Council supported the funding bid and that schemes included in the Management Plan were ultimately adopted by the Council. However, Chris added that the Council could only take forward a certain number of enhancement schemes every year and that priority was currently being given to the Creswell / Markland and Hollin Hill Grips / Pleasley Vale part of the District, meaning that ones identified in Old Blackwell may not be identified for action quickly.
- 5.5 Opinion was divided over whether replacement tree planting would be desirable in the churchyard. It was suggested that from an amenity perspective it would be desirable and would enhance the character of the conservation area. However, Reverend Manley and Mr Corbishley argued that experience elsewhere had shown that trees could cause problems in churchyards through root damage and they were therefore reluctant to commit to replacement planting. After some discussion Chris suggested that this could be put forward as a potential enhancement scheme that would be open to further discussion with the Church representatives.
- 5.6 It was also mentioned that some of the coping stones on the churchyard wall were missing and had not been replaced. It was suggested that it would be beneficial to seek to replace these.
- 6.0 Next steps**
- 6.1 Chris and Jonathan thanked everyone for attending the meeting and advised that the information would be considered during the preparation of the draft appraisal and management plan. Jonathan

- advised everyone that they could contact him following the meeting with any additional information or points they did not raise during the meeting.
- 6.2 He advised the group that the next stage of the process is to report the draft document to Bolsover District Council's Planning Committee in December 2009 followed by a four week public consultation period. During this time an open public meeting will be held. The consultation event and public meeting will be advertised and stakeholders will be informed of the relevant dates.
- 6.3 Feedback from the public participation phase will be used to revise the document where necessary before being reported back to the Planning Committee followed by formal adoption by the Council. Jonathan stated that it was currently programmed to adopt the document in April 2010.