

Report for Resolution

Report to Executive
10 June 2009
Report of Head of Planning and Regeneration
Subject Conservation Area Appraisal for Mile Cross

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Purpose

To consider the Conservation Area Appraisal for Mile Cross, which explains why the area has special architectural and historic character and how this character should be managed and enhanced.

Recommendations

To approve:

- (1) the conservation area appraisal and management and enhancement plans for Mile Cross Conservation Area following public consultation as City Council Policy.
- (2) the addition of buildings in appendix 2 to the Local List of Buildings of Architectural or Historic Interest.
- (3) an extension to the conservation area to include St Catherine's Church and Hall, the Vicarage and Mile Cross Library shown in appendix 1.

Financial Consequences

The appraisals set out aspirations for enhancement of the areas over the next five years. The preparation and approval of the Conservation Area Appraisal can increase the chances of being able to secure external partnership funding to assist with the delivery of conservation area enhancements. English Heritage raised one possibility for this in their response to the consultation. Any capital projects that are developed as a result of these appraisals would be the subject of separate authorisation and monitoring through the capital programme processes.

Risk Assessment

There are no risks.

Strategic Priority and Outcome/Service Priorities

The report helps to achieve the strategic objectives to ensure the City has a clean and healthy environment. The completion of the appraisal contributes towards fulfilling the objectives of the 2009/10 Service Plan for Planning Services.

Executive Member: Councillor Morrey - Sustainable City Development

Ward: Mile Cross

Contact Officers

Chris Bennett, Conservation and Design Officer
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Background Documents

Final Draft Conservation Area Appraisal for Mile Cross (available in the member rooms and at www.norwich.gov.uk).

Report

Background

Conservation Areas

1. A Conservation Area is defined as “an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance” (Section 69(1) Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act) Act 1990).
2. There are 17 Conservation Areas in Norwich. Existing appraisals for St Matthews, Thorpe Hamlet and Thorpe Ridge were adopted by Executive on 21 March 2007, the City Centre Appraisal was adopted on 19 September 2007, and appraisals for Eaton, Old Lakenham, Trowse, Millgate and Thorpe St Andrew were adopted on 19 March 2008. This report concerns the appraisal for the Mile Cross Conservation Area located to the north west of the City.
3. Mile Cross was designated a conservation area on 2 January 1979.

Conservation Area Appraisals

4. Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Building & Conservation Areas) Act 1991 places a duty on local planning authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas. This is the purpose of the Conservation Area Appraisals.
5. English Heritage Guidance on Conservation Area management advises that “Once the appraisal process has been completed, proposals for the future management of the area will need to be developed. These should take the form of a mid- to long- term strategy for preserving and enhancing the conservation area, addressing the issues and recommendations for action arising from the appraisal and identifying any further or detailed work needed for their implementation.” The last section of our appraisals contains a limited number of proposals for enhancing the conservation area that the Urban Design and Conservation team intend to develop with the support of the other relevant sections of the City Council and private businesses and individuals.

Boundaries

6. When undertaking an appraisal a local planning authority should consider whether to change their boundaries. It is proposed to extend the Mile Cross conservation area to include St Catherine’s Church and Hall, the Vicarage and Mile Cross Library (see appendix 1 map). All four buildings are closely linked to the development of the estate and continue to serve the community. St Catherine’s Church was listed grade II* and St Catherine’s Hall listed grade II on 21st August 2006. It is proposed to add the Vicarage and Mile Cross library to the local list. If approved by executive the extension of the conservation area will be advertised in the Norwich Evening News and the London Gazette, and there is a requirement to also notify English Heritage and the Secretary of

State.

Local List

7. The City Council has since 1988 had a list of buildings of local interest in Conservation Areas, which, whilst not officially 'Listable', are nevertheless considered to be buildings of local architectural and historic interest that make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area. The buildings on the local list within the Mile Cross conservation area have been reviewed through the appraisal and it is recommended to add the buildings listed in appendix 2. The effect of placing a building on the local list is to raise awareness of its quality so that when applications are submitted to demolish or substantially change a locally listed building they are considered in light of the positive contribution these buildings make to the character of the conservation area. Placing a building on the local list does not alter the permitted development rights or approvals processes that apply.

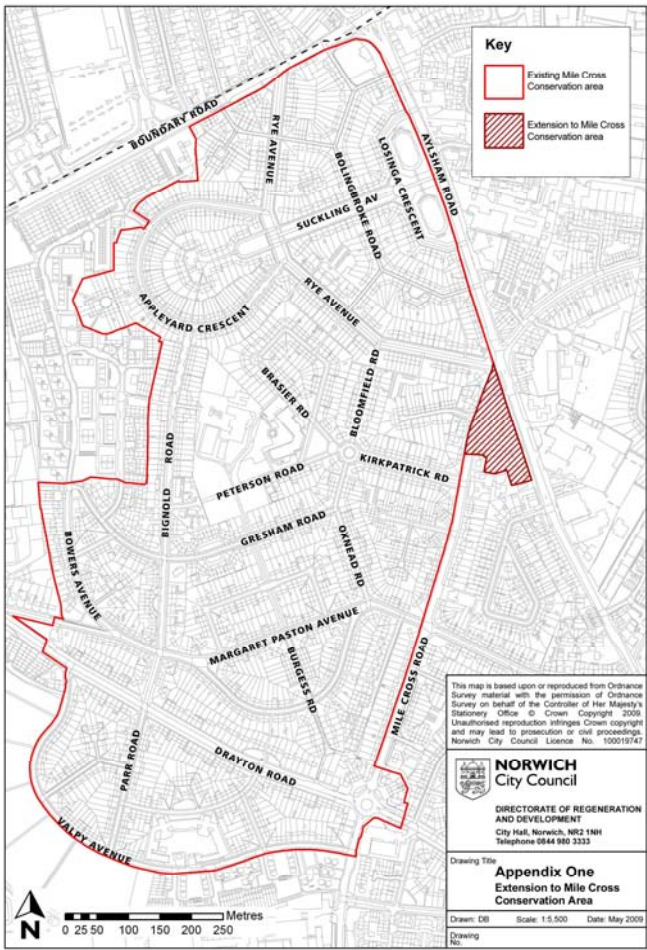
Consultation

8. Before the draft appraisal was prepared for consultation an informal 'walkabout' of each area was arranged with ward members and local organisations such as the Norwich Society to gain an appreciation of issues. Public consultation on the draft appraisals took place over a four-week period from 6 March 2009 to 3 April 2009. During this time the document was available to view as a headline item on the City Council's website and at Planning reception. A public exhibition took place in Mile Cross between 17 March and 20 March 2009. A letter was sent to all residents within the proposed area for extension and to all owners and occupiers of buildings proposed for local listing. The following organisations and people were sent copies of the document and invited to comment:

Friends of Mile Cross Gardens
Vicar of St Catherine's Church - Rev Paul Mackey
Norfolk County Council
Norwich Society
Norfolk Constabulary - PC Mike Sweeney
Resident attending initial walkabout - Richard Edwards
Resident attending initial walkabout - Steve Burnham
Wisearchive – Pauline Weinstein
Cllr Morpew
Cllr Blakeway
Cllr Gihawi
Cllr Bradford
Cllr Morrey

9. A list of all consultation feedback received for the conservation area appraisal for Mile Cross is attached at appendix 3. The response column those changes to the documents that are proposed following the public consultation.

Map showing extension to conservation area



Buildings to add to the local list:

Aylsham Road

The Boundary PH

Pavilions and arcades, Mile Cross Gardens

St Catherine's Vicarage

Mile Cross Library

Drayton Road

169-195 (odd)

289 (former Galley Hill PH)

General

Consultee	Comment	Response
English Heritage	On page 1- of the appraisal, the contribution of 4 well known local architects to the initial phase of development is recorded. It would be helpful to know which houses are by local architects and consideration might be given to including a colour coded map of the first phase and copies of the original architects' drawing for these house types, some of them might be reproduced within the document.	This has been researched and no evidence of which houses were designed by which architects was found, with the exception that the sketch of houses on Losinga Crescent in the Architect's Journal 1/3/23 which shows that Stanley Wearing was the architect for these houses. This has now been referred to on Page 10.
	Nowhere in the document is there a detailed consideration of the estate as it exists today, though some reference is made to this within the 'Management and Enhancement' Section. Having visited the estate I am concerned that its quality, and therefore its significance and value, has been seriously eroded and compromised by the widespread poor quality changes (including uPVC windows, replacement front doors, satellite dishes to front elevations, parking to front gardens, replacement of hedges with fences etc.) The extent of these changes are such that they begin to question the value of retaining the designation of the conservation area and urgent consideration will need to be given as to how this erosion might be halted, and preferably reversed.	Although the extent of minor changes such as satellite dishes have contributed to a deterioration in the appearance of the conservation area, it was considered that the most important characteristics of Mile Cross is that it is was the model post WWI estate for Norwich, and that it was designed on garden suburb principles with the involvement of a nationally recognised town planner/architect and involved the work of local architects. The character of the estate can therefore be managed and enhanced and preserved through continuing to provide good quality social housing, and maintaining the characteristics of the garden suburb i.e. maintaining trees and verges and ensuring the upkeep of public spaces and communal buildings.
	Further consideration should also be given by the city council to the integration of car parking into the estate, and how the erosion of grass verges might be better controlled.	This is highlighted as management and enhancement goal.
	The proposed extension to the conservation area, to incorporate the community buildings, is to be welcomed. While St Catherine's Church and Church Hall are afforded protection through being listed, the public library currently has no protection, but is a building of local interest that makes an important contribution to the conservation area. Its suggested addition to the local list is therefore also supported.	Noted

	In addition to the actions suggested in the 'Management and Enhancement' section, this might also include the use of Article 4 directions, preparing specific, targeted advice sheets for house owners/tenants on replacement windows and doors, the siting of satellite dishes, the treatment of front gardens and boundaries, the design of porches etc and whether grant aid might be made available to support this work (eg to compensate householders for the extra expenditure in using purpose made joinery rather than uPVC windows).	For the reason highlighted by Cllr Blakeway below i.e. this is an area of low income levels, the imposition of an article 4 (2) and insistence on retaining single glazing may be considered unreasonable by tenants, especially as it would be contrary to the council's own policy of replacing original windows with uPVC. There is an option to replace windows with better designed timber double glazed sash windows, but this would incur additional expense.
	Finally in this respect (and subject to the availability of funding) English Heritage would be willing to consider an application from the local authority for a Partnership Scheme to run this conservation area.	This would be a possibility if the council chose to match fund the repair of timber framed windows.
Cllr Blakeway	Would like to see traffic management proposals included within the report, as said before the estate was not designed at a time when car ownership was common and many of the roads cannot accommodate the volume and speeds of traffic that occurs across the estate. Consideration should be given to traffic management systems such as traffic calming and speed restrictions.	Welcome suggestion. This has now been added as an additional management and enhancement.
	The conservation area should be extended to include Sloughbottom Park to the south of the estate. This park was designed by Captain Sandys-Winsch who was also responsible for a number of other parks including Mile Cross Gardens, Waterloo Park and Wensum Park.	The importance of Sloughbottom Park is recognised, however it did not feature in the original plan of the estate, and other parks of equal importance are not designated as Conservation Areas. Any proposed development within this area would need to consider the setting of the conservation area and the policies in the Replacement Local Plan are considered to provide appropriate protection to the park.
	Consideration should be given to extending the conservation area to the East to incorporate the Mile Cross Baptist Church, now owned by the Phoenix Children's Centre and Glenmore Gardens where several houses still retain their original 1930's art deco features such as leaded windows and original front doors	This has been considered but not recommended. The small extension that is proposed is justified by the exceptional quality of the church (listed grade II*), the church hall (grade II) and their connection to the vicarage (locally listed) and the library (locally listed and part of a group of library buildings across the city). Although charming, the Phoenix Children's centre is not of the same architectural quality as these buildings and individually does not warrant annexing two ordinary buildings on the east side of Mile Cross Road into the conservation area. Glenmore Gardens was not part of the original estate, is not of high architectural or historic value and is disconnected from the conservation due to a lack of access from Mile Cross Road. Additionally English Heritage did not propose that these buildings should be included.

	<p>Disappointed at the level of community involvement in the development of the report, apart from the initial estate walkabout held last year and the open days at the library when the report was completed how have residents been involved and engaged in this process ? There is a wealth of local knowledge and opinion in the area and I think the opportunity to embrace this and develop a document which could be truly owned by the local community has been lost.</p>	<p>The consultation process was the same as for other residential conservation areas involving a walkabout, exhibition and newspaper publicity. We worked closely with the Council's Neighbourhood Manager to agree the approach to consultation. Although it would have been ideal to do more consultation, we did not have the resources to undertake more thorough consultation process. The approach to consultation in relation to further conservation area appraisals will be reviewed in the light of the resources available and the Council's engagement policy.</p>
	<p>Although I agree with some of the proposals [in the management and enhancement section] I think that these need to be considered in the context that the area is an area of high social need and that income deprivation plays an important factor in many residents lives and this may reflect upon the condition and visual appearance of some of the housing.</p>	<p>It is recognised that there is a high social need in the area. However the original intention of the estate was to achieve high quality development for people in housing need and with little money. The appraisal is an aspirational document that seeks to enhance the character and appearance of the area rather than accepting lower quality. Some enhancement goals can be achieved with relatively little expenditure. Some of the more detrimental alterations, for example stone cladding to brick elevations and unsympathetic brick walls, are a result of additional expenditure by private owners.</p>
	<p>Parking on verges is an issue that many residents are concerned about but without any viable alternatives many residents park their cars on the verges as there is nowhere else to park safely, the estate was designed before car ownership was common and many of the streets cannot accommodate on-street parking.</p>	<p>Noted – the document is encouraging the investigation of ways in which car can be incorporated into the area without being visually detrimental.</p>
	<p>I am concerned about comments made about alterations that do not use traditional materials, in the past organisations such as the Norwich Society have criticised the use of UPVC windows in houses in the Mile Cross area, however it needs to be noted that these houses are very poorly insulated, do not have cavity walls and are in many cases very cold and damp, double glazing for these houses is an urgent need throughout the estate and I feel that this need for 'thermal comfort' for residents, many of whom are elderly or raising young children, far outweighs the need to preserve the original single glazed, and now completely rotten, windows</p>	<p>Within conservation areas it is generally considered good practice to use traditional materials that reinforce the special character of an area. It is also an opportunity to encourage the use of more sustainable products such as timber that lock in carbon rather than products such as uPVC windows that are inherently unsustainable. Double glazed timber windows achieve the same u-values as uPVC. However, the need for affordable better insulation is noted. As no article 4 direction is proposed there is no attempt to require the use of timber windows.</p>
Resident of Spenny Road NR7	<p>The area should be enlarged throughout inner Norwich such the Angel Road area 'cottage style housing'</p>	<p>Mile Cross has been chosen because it is significant as the first large scale post WW1 housing estate, and because it involved the work of a well known town planner and local architects. The remaining estates, although on the whole nationally considered to be good quality, are not as historic or architecturally significant.</p>

	<p>A lot of damage has been caused by new uPVC replacement windows and door being disproportionate or without glazing bars. New materials in themselves are OK. Also windows are replaced without a reveal (flush brick work).</p>	<p>Noted.</p>
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