

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: THURSDAY, 12 APRIL 2012
title: SUGGESTED EXTENSION TO LONGRIDGE CONSERVATION AREA AT HIGHER ROAD
submitted by: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
principal author: ADRIAN DOWD – PRINCIPAL PLANNING OFFICER (DESIGN AND CONSERVATION)

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To seek Member agreement to not pursuing the extension of Longridge Conservation Area at Higher Road.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Council Ambitions – To protect and enhance the existing environmental quality of our area.
- Community Objectives – The Ribble Valley Sustainable Community Strategy 2007-2013 has three relevant strategic objectives – maintain, protect and enhance all natural and built features that contribute to the quality of the environment. Ensure that the design of buildings respects local character and enhances local distinctiveness. Sustainably manage and protect industrial and historical sites.
- Corporate Priorities - Objective 3.3 of the Corporate Plan commits us to maintaining and improving the environmental quality of the Ribble Valley. Objective 3.8 of the corporate plan commits us to conserving and enhancing the local distinctiveness and character of our towns, villages and countryside when considering development proposals.
- Other Considerations – None.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Section 69, states that every local planning authority shall from time to time determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and, shall designate these areas as conservation areas.

2.2 Section 69 of the Act also states that it is the duty of the local planning authority from time to time to review the past exercise of functions under this section and to determine whether any parts or any further parts of their area should be designated as conservation areas.

2.3 Longridge Conservation Area was first designated on 20 December 1979.

2.4 At the Planning and Development Committee of 7 October 2003 Members authorised the designation of an extension to the Longridge Conservation Area to incorporate Derby

Road, a section of Inglewhite Road and the section of Berry Lane to the north west of the former Co-op building.

- 2.5 In 2005, the Borough Council commissioned The Conservation Studio consultants to appraise and provide management guidance for all of the Ribble Valley's existing 16 conservation areas, and to consider 5 areas for new conservation area designation. Following the completion of this exercise public consultation on the proposals was undertaken in December 2006/January 2007.

At the Planning and Development Committee of 3 April 2007 Members authorised the designation of five new conservation areas in accordance with the recommendations of the consultants. This provided new conservation areas for Newtown, Longridge and St Lawrence's Church, Longridge.

At the Planning and Development Committee of 6 March 2008 Members authorised the designation of five extensions to Longridge Conservation Area in accordance with the recommendations of the consultants.

- 2.6 At the Planning and Development Committee of 22 May 2008 Members authorised the designation of two extensions to Longridge Conservation Area at Stonebridge Mill and Crumpax Farm following a request for such consideration from the Town Council and Longridge Heritage Committee.

- 2.7 In November 2012 the Borough Council's Principal Planning Officer (Design & Conservation) received a request for consideration of the inclusion within Longridge Conservation Area of land adjacent to the conservation area at Higher Road. This land is also the area designated as 'Essential Open Space' under Policy G6 of the Local Plan. The officer's response is appended and concludes:

"In my opinion, the part of the G6 site referred to above does not have special interest in itself. Furthermore, existing policies/duties relating to the setting and views into/out of the Conservation Area and the setting of the listed buildings would appear to ensure the appropriate consideration of the historic environment in any development proposals. Therefore, I do not believe it expedient to pursue conservation area designation for the G6 site".

- 2.8 Policy ENV16 of the Ribble Valley Districtwide Local Plan (adopted June 1998) states:

"Within conservation areas development will be strictly controlled to ensure that it reflects the character of the area in terms of scale, size, design and materials. Trees, important open spaces and natural features will also be protected as appropriate. The desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area will also be **a material consideration in deciding development proposals outside the designated area which would affect its setting or views into or out of the area**".

Policy ENV19 of the Ribble Valley Districtwide Local Plan states:

*"Development proposals on sites within **the setting of buildings listed** as being of special architectural or historic interest, which cause visual harm to the setting of the building, will be resisted. In assessing harm caused by any proposal the following factors will be taken into account:*

- i. the desirability of preserving the setting of the building;*

- ii. *the effect of the proposed development on the character of the listed building;*
- iii. *any effect on the economic viability of the listed building;*
- iv. *the contribution which the listed building makes to the townscape or countryside;*
- v. *the extent to which the proposed works would bring substantial benefits to the community including economic benefits and enhancement of the environment’.*

Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that in the exercise of planning functions special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

The now defunct Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 ‘Planning and the Historic Environment’ (September 1994) stated that *‘the desirability of preserving or enhancing the area should also, in the Secretary of State’s view, be a material consideration in the planning authority’s handling of development proposals which are outside the conservation area but would affect its setting, or views into or out of the area’* (paragraph 4.14).

Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that in considering whether to grant planning permission for development that affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its **setting** or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

The National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012) states:

“When considering the designation of conservation areas, local planning authorities should ensure that an area justifies such status because of its special architectural or historic interest, and that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest” (paragraph 127).

The ‘Setting of Heritage Assets: English Heritage Guidance’ (EH, October 2011) states:

‘entire towns also have a setting which, in a few cases, has been explicitly recognised in green belt designations. A conservation area that includes the settings of a number of listed buildings, for example, will also have its own setting, as will the town in which it is situated. The numbers and proximity of heritage assets in urban areas means that setting is intimately linked to considerations of townscape and urban design’ (2.2).

‘The setting of some heritage assets may have remained relatively unaltered over a long period and closely resemble the setting in which the asset was constructed or first used. The likelihood of this original setting surviving unchanged tends to decline with age and, where this is the case, it is likely to make an important contribution to the heritage asset’s significance

.. the recognition of, and response to, the setting of heritage assets as an aspect of townscape character is an important aspect of the design process for new development, and will, at least in part, determine the quality of the final result

.. arguments about the sensitivity of a setting to change should not be based on the numbers of people visiting it. This will not adequately take account of qualitative issues, such as the importance of quiet and tranquillity as an attribute of setting; constraints on the public to routinely gain access to a setting because of remoteness or challenging terrain; or the importance of the setting to a local community who may be few in number’ (2.4).

'the harmony of other townscape settings .. may be unified by a common alignment, scale or other attribute that it would be desirable for new development to adopt' (2.5).

Seeing the History in the View: A Method for Assessing Heritage Significance within Views (EH, May 2011) also refers.

- 2.9 A recent appeal decision (APP/T2350/A/11/2163951; erection of two detached dwellings with detached garages; decision date 13 march 2012) concerning land at 46 Higher Road Longridge has some relevance. The Inspector dismissed the appeal but within his reasoning suggested that: (i) the setting of Club Row did not extend beyond its curtilage wall and (ii) if the Borough Council had thought land adjoining the conservation area to be important to its setting it would have included it within the conservation area.

3 CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 I am mindful of the Government's request at paragraph 127 of the National Planning Policy Framework that conservation areas justify their status so as not to devalue the policy.

- 3.2 The legal and policy requirements in section 2.8 above concerning conservation area and listed building setting and views into and out of conservation areas, has not changed with the issuing of the NPPF. Whilst I note the opinions of the Inspector in APP/T2350/A/11/2163951 I am mindful that these are site specific and should not necessarily be extrapolated to considerations for Club Row and all of the Higher Road section of Longridge Conservation Area.

- 3.3 Longridge Conservation Area has been subject to a number of reviews in recent years by officers and consultants in accordance with the duty at section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

- 3.4 A letter was received from Longridge Town Council before the above appeal decision which states:

*"Longridge Town Councillors, at their meeting on the 14th December 2011, considered combined representations by the Longridge History Society and the action group, 'Dilworth Community Voice', setting out the case for the extending the conservation area that incorporates Club Row on Higher Road. **It is planning applications for residential development on G6 status land in the immediate vicinity of Club Row that has prompted the call for additional protection by extension of the conservation area** (my emphasis)..."*

Councillors agreed unanimously that the case presented by the representatives of the Dilworth Community Voice Action Group had been well made. It was resolved that the Town Council supports the case as set out by the Dilworth Community Voice Action Group for an extension of the Longridge conservation area by incorporation of the adjacent G6 designated land".

- 3.5 Conservation area designation requires a considerable input of time and resource.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources – None.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – N/A
- Political – N/A.
- Reputation – N/A.

5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 In my opinion and mindful of the Borough Council's duty at Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the suggested conservation area extension is not an area of special architectural and historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.

5.2 Whilst I am conscious of the opinions of some local residents and the Town Council I am also mindful of paragraph 127 of the NPPF and do not consider it expedient to pursue this matter further.

6 **RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE**

6.1 Agree to not pursuing the extension of Longridge Conservation Area at Higher Road.

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

For further information please ask for Adrian Dowd, extension 4513.