

**EXETER CITY COUNCIL**

**EXECUTIVE  
29 JUNE 2009**

**RESULTS OF CONSULTATION ON  
TOPSHAM CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL  
AND MANAGEMENT PLAN**

**1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To consider representations received in relation to the draft Topsham Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAAMP) and proposed amendments to the document to be recommended for adoption.

**2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 On 25 November 2008 Executive agreed the draft Topsham Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan for public consultation.
- 2.2 Copies of the document were made available from the Civic Centre and on the Council website. A public exhibition was held on 4 and 5 March at The Globe Hotel, Topsham. This event was advertised with posters throughout the area and also in the Express and Echo. A period of six weeks was allowed for comments.
- 2.3 148 people attended the exhibition and 24 written responses were received, the majority of which were in favour of the proposed amendments to the boundary and document, with some offering further suggestions and/or corrections.

**3 CONSULTATION RESPONSES**

- 3.1 The main issues raised in the responses received were:
- Issues of traffic, parking, signage and pedestrian safety
  - Extending the conservation area boundary further to include all of Elm Grove Road, Greatwood Terrace, RSPB site and Ashford Road
  - Protection of boundary wall in Ashford Road
  - Lack of emphasis on Landscape setting
- 3.2 A schedule of the comments received and the proposed responses is included at Appendix I.
- 3.3 The criteria for proposed boundary amendments are included at Appendix II.
- 3.4 Following the consultation, officers recommend no further alterations be made to the boundary; a plan showing the proposed amendments to the area is attached.
- 3.5 The amended version of the draft CAAMP is available on the website.

**4 CONCLUSION**

- 4.1 The production of conservation area appraisals is an important objective of the Planning Service. Consistent local principles and national conservation area guidance are followed. It is anticipated that adoption of the appraisal will be recommended to Executive at the end of June.

**5 PLANNING MEMBER WORKING GROUP COMMENTS**

- 5.1 Planning Member Working Group discussed the report and supported adoption of the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan as revised.

**6 RECOMMENDATION**

- 6.1 Members are recommended to adopt the amended conservation area, shown on the attached plan, and the appraisal and management plan.

**RICHARD SHORT  
HEAD OF PLANNING AND BUILDING CONTROL**

**ECONOMY AND DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE**

**APPENDIX I**

**SCHEDULE OF COMMENTS RECEIVED DURING PUBLIC  
CONSULTATION, TOPSHAM CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL &  
MANAGEMENT PLAN**

*Proposed response in italics.*

<b>Address</b>	<b>Comments</b>
1. 1 Chapel Place	<p>Greatwood Terrace could also be added to the conservation area. The parapet at Elm Grove Road railway bridge is an ugly solution to a non-existent problem.</p> <p><i>Greatwood Terrace is not considered to meet the published criteria for proposed boundary amendments, in particular criterion 1. The Council agrees that the parapet on Elm Grove Road railway bridge is unsightly. Network Rail's case for constructing it was that there was no practical alternative</i></p>
2. 10 Victoria Road	<p>Boundary could be extended further to include Ashford Road and the old boundary wall to Retreat House. The cobbled paths need protection and maintenance, as do walls at the back of Globefields. Better maintenance required of green areas, in particular roadside hedges and banks. Document good but conservative.</p> <p><i>Ashford Road is not considered to meet the published criteria for proposed boundary amendments, in particular criterion 1. The condition of the cobbled paths and walls has been highlighted in the proposed amended document.</i></p>
3. Mansard, Parkfield Road	<p>The allotments should be protected from development. The area of Bowling Green Marshes should be included to protect the river side embankments which form part of the character of the area.</p> <p><i>Conservation area designation is primarily about protection of urban areas and the spaces and landscape closely associated with them. The area of Bowling Green Marshes is designated as Valley Park, a Ramsar Wetland area and a Site of Special Scientific Interest. As such, this area is sufficiently protected from any unsuitable development proposals.</i></p>
4. 6 Elm Grove Road	<p>Agrees with proposed boundary alterations. Found exhibition interesting and informative. Houses on the north side of Elm Grove Road between Bridge Inn and roundabout should be included because, despite alterations, they seem to be early C20th and contribute positively to the town landscape.</p> <p>Concern about cycle route through Topsham, particularly where there is cycle/pedestrian conflict. Asks that cyclists should dismount in these areas. Wishes to see a better solution to the railway bridge parapet on Bowling Green Lane. Concern about proposal to add traffic lights to the bridge over the Clyst and notes alternative plans for a separate pedestrian/cycle bridge.</p> <p><i>Elm Grove Road is not considered to meet the published criteria for proposed boundary amendments in particular</i></p>

	<p><i>criteria 1, 7 and 8. Pedestrians are more at risk from motorised traffic than cyclists and there is no case to require cyclists to dismount. . The Council agrees that the parapet on Elm Grove Road railway bridge is unsightly. Network Rail's case for constructing it was that there was no practical alternative. The proposal for traffic lights on the bridge over the Clyst originated with Devon County Council but other solutions are now being examined.</i></p>
5. 51 Retreat Road	<p>The boundary wall of Retreat House along Sir Alex Walk and Ashford Road should be protected. Hopes areas outside the conservation area will still be protected from poor development, such as dormer windows.</p> <p><i>The boundary wall adjacent to Sir Alex Walk is within the conservation area and has been highlighted in the second draft document. Normal planning controls apply outside the conservation area and whilst some works are permitted development and therefore outside the control of the Council, where applications are made, consideration is given to the effect of any proposals on the surrounding townscape.</i></p>
6. 4 Exeter Road	<p>Conservation area should be extended to include Elm Grove Road and the fields to the Clyst to preserve views and some older properties. Control should be exercised immediately adjacent to the CA where there would be an impact on the CA, such as in the development of unsightly outbuildings. There are too many road signs and these should be grouped to have less impact. Would like to see fewer yellow lines and parking restricted in some other way.</p> <p><i>Elm Grove Road and the fields north are not considered to meet the published criteria for proposed boundary amendments, in particular criteria 1, 3, 7 and 8. Normal planning controls apply outside the conservation area, but the impact any proposals may have on the conservation area will be considered. Devon County Environment, Economy and Culture Directorate will be approached following this appraisal in relation to a signage/yellow lines audit to see if this can be reduced.</i></p>
7. 33 Higher Shapter Street	<p>Areas included in the proposed additions are not particularly attractive or historic. Would like to see good quality modern development encouraged to enhance the area. Does not feel everything should stay the same.</p> <p><i>Conservation area designation is not about preserving in aspic and good quality contemporary design is a welcome addition to the conservation area. The appraisal document sets this out under the "Design Guidance" section and the Council is supportive of schemes that integrate modern design with historic townscape.</i></p>
8. Riverbank, The Retreat Drive	<p>The wall beside Ashford Road and Sir Alex Walk should be protected. Sir Alex Walk is a public footpath and in very poor condition.</p> <p><i>Ashford Road is not considered to meet the published criteria</i></p>

	<i>for proposed boundary amendments, in particular criterion 1. The boundary wall adjacent to Sir Alex Walk is within the conservation area and has been highlighted in the proposed amended document. The condition of the footpath has been noted and is highlighted in the proposed amended document.</i>
9. 38 Elm Grove Road	The C19th limestone wall along the boundary of 38 Elm Grove Road enhances the area. The parapet over the railway bridge on Elm Grove Road is of no merit and should not have been allowed in a conservation area. <i>Comments regarding the wall area noted – it is already within the conservation area. The Council agrees that the parapet on Elm Grove Road railway bridge is unsightly. Network Rail's case for constructing it was that there was no practical alternative.</i>
10. No address given	Agrees with proposed boundary alterations. <i>Comments noted.</i>
11. 7 Pound Close	No mention is made in the document of the Topsham Museum which forms an important visitor attraction and shows the history of Topsham. <i>Comments noted and proposed amended document will reflect this.</i>
12. 17 Grove Hill	Questions whether there will be any further permissions required for the erection of a shed or green house on the allotments if the area were to be designated as a conservation area. <i>The erection of sheds on allotments is dealt with under separate allotment legislation and is not a planning matter providing the shed is does not exceed 200m<sup>2</sup>. This is the case whether or not they are within a conservation area.</i>
13. The Belvedere, Mount Howe	Agrees with inclusion of cemetery but not of Denver Road area. The Quay Antiques centre is a central feature of the town and deserves some comment as an important relic of the industrial past. Thought should be given to how the building or its environs could be improved. Area of woodland on Monmouth Street/Bowling green Lane is unattractive and overgrown. Can steps be taken to improve the area? Numerous issues are raised but few actions proposed, which diminishes the impact of the appraisal. No way forward proposed to tackle parking problem. Suggests a Blue Plaque scheme for the points of historic or architectural interest. <i>Comments noted, referred to relevant sections within the document. The proposed amended draft of the document notes the industrial past of the Quay Antiques centre and proposes actions on issues raised. Council has limited powers over privately owned land in terms of clearance. The Blue Plaque scheme is a National scheme run by English Heritage and does not currently extend to the South West. However the local Civic Society has, in the past, proposed blue plaques to commemorate famous people or events and</i>

	<i>the impetus for such a scheme must come from a local organisation, such as The Topsham Society.</i>
14. 34 Station Road	<p>Does not agree with proposed boundary amendments, considers that they would dilute the existing conservation area and makes a case for reducing the area to focus on the historic core. Does not agree with fragmentation into sub areas and states that there has been oversimplification of general building styles and over emphasis on other areas. Points out discrepancies in the document relating to specific roads or phrases. Praises Management Plan layout and agrees with many of the issues raised. Disapproves of value-laden prose. States limitations to CA designation. Points out minor editorial errors in the document.</p> <p><i>Comments regarding the proposed boundary amendments are noted, however after further consideration there is no compelling reason to suggest alternatives. Subdivision of a large conservation area into distinct character areas is a practice supported by English Heritage guidance. Discrepancies in document and other editorial errors in document have been corrected in second draft.</i></p>
15. The Topsham Society	<p>Agrees with the proposed boundary extensions, however proposes a broader and simpler extension to include Ashford Road and Retreat Road, Greatwood Terrace, Elm Grove Road including the fields down to the River Clyst and Grove Hill.</p> <p>Specific attention should be drawn to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Landscape setting and nature conservation features - the need to protect these, including reference to the surrounding countryside designations.</li> <li>2. Topsham Quay – importance is diluted by being split between 2 sub areas. Plans to complete dredging works and possibilities of introducing boat launching should be incorporated into a management plan for the quay.</li> <li>3. Signage and Visual Clutter – agree with comments and asks LPA to take initiative and liaise with other relevant authorities to make something happen.</li> <li>4. Article 4 Directions – Need to protect walls etc has been highlighted. Supports the case for an A4 Direction to be made as a blanket Order and agrees with case for strengthening A4 controls within The Strand Gardens.</li> </ol> <p>Detailed comments on sub-areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Area 1, The North - Propose recreation ground be identified as a positive space on the key features plan; agree with proposed information board on archaeology of the area; who would take initiative for landscaping works to recreation ground; reference should be made to the Ferry.</li> <li>2. Area 2, Medieval Core - See comments above on Topsham Quay. View from quay should be identified as important; signage clutter is a particular issue; agree with comprehensive enhancement scheme for</li> </ol>

	<p>Fire Station area...who would take initiative on this? Cobbled passageway behind Cromer House is not mentioned.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Area 3, The Strand - Views down Higher Shapter Street and across river from Hannaford Quay and the Museum should be marked as important views. Strand Court has an attractive central garden. Other enhancements of Strand Court would be beneficial. Who would be responsible?</li> <li>4. Area 4, The Goat Walk – Issue of traffic along foreshore between Riversmeet Road and The Strand. States some other important views not labelled on plans. Asks whether RSPB site should be included? Comments on landscape setting should be included here.</li> <li>5. Area 5, Bridge Inn – Recently installed metal parapet on the railway bridge should be marked as being detrimental and Network Rail informed and requested to remedy this. Other important views stated. Setting of Bridge Inn raised as issue in light of DCC proposals for traffic lights. Positive area of trees by Holman Way is park not marked on plan.</li> <li>6. Area 6, Parkfield Road – No specific comments.</li> <li>7. Community Facilities – tennis courts adjacent to swimming pool and recreation ground should be included in recreational facilities.</li> <li>8. Open Spaces and Trees – text to be expanded to include reference to important designations.</li> <li>9. Summary – should include landscape setting</li> <li>10. Design Principles – Statement is brief and not cross referenced with existing Design Principles.</li> </ol> <p>Agrees with issues in management Plan but feels it would be helpful to set out who would be responsible for taking action and a timescale should be given. Urges Council to progress Article 4(2) Direction. Issues raised in document and not carried forward into management plan should be reviewed further to identify management actions.</p> <p><i>Ashford Road, Greatwood Terrace, Elm Grove Road and the fields were considered as part of the initial appraisal, both individually and also as part of a much larger conservation area. However it was not considered that the areas met the published criteria for proposed boundary amendments, in particular criterion 1, 7 and 8 and in general it was considered that the inclusion of all of these areas would dilute the special character of the remaining area. All other comments have been noted and changes made in respect to them in the proposed amended draft of the document. In terms of imposing Article 4 Directions in Topsham, it has always been the Council's intention to give further consideration to these after the programme of conservation area appraisals has been completed. It is intended that a report to consider whether members wish to proceed with a programme of Article 4 Direction shall be completed in Autumn this year and because areas of Topsham have been identified as being at</i></p>
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	<i>risk, it is likely that these will be identified as a priority in any programme.</i>
16. 13 Elm Grove Road	Shares concerns over state of Topsham's streets and agrees about obtrusive signage. Surprised that allotments are proposed to be included, but does not object. Mixed feelings about the inclusion of early C20th properties on Elm Grove Road and would not object to Article 4 Directions being more widely used. <i>Comments noted</i>
17. 33 The Strand	Elm Grove Road and Grove Hill should be included, as well as fields down to the Clyst and the RSPB site as they form part of the landscape setting of Topsham. Makes several detailed comments on errors/word usage within the document. <i>Elm Grove Road, the fields and the RSPB site were considered as part of the initial appraisal, both individually and also as part of a much larger conservation area. However it was not considered that it met the published criteria for proposed boundary amendments, in particular criterion 1, 7 and 8. Other comments have been noted and changes made in respect to them in the proposed amended draft of the document.</i>
18. 3 Denver Place, Elmgrove Road	Agrees with boundary amendments. Comments on abundance of traffic signs and "wirescape". Traffic calming measures would be useful, particularly in High Street, Denver Road, Elmgrove Road and Station Road. <i>Comments noted. Devon County Council Environment, Economy and Culture Directorate will be approached following this appraisal in relation to a traffic audit and suggestions for traffic calming will be discussed.</i>
19. 4 Higher Shapter Street	In favour of proposed boundary amendments and suggests that Area 2 be extended to include the area from the allotments to Elm Grove Avenue and the existing boundary on the south west side of the road. The photograph of Higher Shapter Street shows a stretch of cobbles that were recently repaired, however the rest of the pavement/road is not in such good condition. Document lacks the detail of the 1993 study and the recent Townscape Appraisal and Design Guide and these should be referenced and acknowledged. Several suggestions for alterations/additions to the document. <i>Elm Grove Road was considered as part of the initial appraisal, however it was not considered that it met the objectives of the published criteria for proposed boundary amendments, in particular criterion 1, 7 and 8 and in general it was considered that the inclusion of the encompassed area would dilute the special character of the remaining area.</i>

<p>20. 2a Elm Grove Road</p>	<p>In favour of the proposed boundary alterations, but does not think they go far enough. Elm Grove Road should be included to the Bridge Inn and Greaterix Terrace (Greatwood??).</p> <p><i>Greatwood Terrace and Elm Grove Road were considered as part of the initial appraisal, both individually and also as part of a much larger conservation area. However it was not considered that the areas met the objectives of the published criteria for proposed boundary amendments, in particular criterion 1, 7 and 8 and in general it was considered that the inclusion of all of these areas would dilute the special character of the remaining area.</i></p>
<p>21. No address</p>	<p>Feels strongly about the bad state of the pavements and roads. Particularly Tresillian Cottages.</p> <p><i>Comments noted. Devon County Council Environment, Economy and Culture Directorate will be approached following this appraisal in relation to a traffic and road audit and suggestions for road repairs will be discussed.</i></p>
<p>22. 55 Victoria Road</p>	<p>Insufficient attention on the major issue of the impact of traffic and parking and the problem of pavements. These are narrow and uneven, forcing pedestrians onto the road. Suggests ways of improving the problem such as banning parking in Fore Street, narrowing the roadway, restricting heavy traffic or creating a pedestrian area.</p> <p><i>Comments noted. Devon County Council Environment, Economy and Culture Directorate will be approached following this appraisal in relation to a traffic and road audit and suggestions for improvements will be discussed.</i></p>
<p>23. No address given</p>	<p>Four houses in Majorfield Road are late C17th not C18th. The former Quaker building is no longer of any architectural value as a result of the building project piloted by ECC which altered its basic form. This is also late C17th</p> <p><i>Comments noted and alterations to text made in proposed amended draft document</i></p>
<p>24. Strand Court Association</p>	<p>Notes that the document is critical about Strand Court but should acknowledge the generally high standards of maintenance, and in particular the garden, which is an asset to The Strand. The design of the buildings does attempt to reflect some of the local materials and the riverside aspect has been recently improved by the rebuilding of balconies. Residents association is discussing improvements of some areas and design guidance would be welcomed. The entrance splay is essential to allow large vehicles to turn and is the only place along The Strand where this is possible.</p> <p><i>The comments in the document regarding this development are aimed at the overall scheme and its impact on the character of the surrounding historic townscape and are not meant to undermine the high standards of maintenance displayed in the public areas. A note has been added to the proposed amended draft to this effect.</i></p>

**APPENDIX II****CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISALS  
CRITERIA FOR PROPOSED BOUNDARY AMENDMENTS**

The starting point should be a presumption against altering boundaries unless there is a strong case based upon the appraisal.

1	Conservation Area boundaries should be drawn to include relevant building groups that have coherence and similarities in either materials, periods or styles and open spaces surrounding these that form an integral part of the building groups (with regard to the fact that CA's are primarily about buildings and their related land not open spaces). Building groups to be included should be substantially intact in terms of architectural features.
2	Boundaries should still exist on the ground and make sense.
3	The setting of important features should be adequately protected.
4	Changes in attitude to architecture and history should be addressed.
5	The impact of any changes in legislation should be addressed.
6	There must be a compelling case for deleting areas that were previously designated.
7	Areas that lack character (holes) lying within the proposed Conservation Area may be included where there is a reasonable probability that a substantial part of the area will be redeveloped within 5-10 years and the designation can therefore influence the quality of development. (It is assumed that CA's will have a life of 5-10 years between reviews). Where a substantial redevelopment scheme has already been approved and is likely to proceed, the decision should rest on whether there is a clear case that the approved scheme will enhance the character of the area.
8	Holes characterised by substantial areas of relatively modern or mundane development where redevelopment is unlikely should be excluded.
9	Where existing areas of a Conservation Area are considered in the appraisal to have more in common with an adjoining Conservation Area, it should generally be removed from the area being appraised and appended to the adjoining area in order to be fully appraised when that area undergoes its next appraisal.
10	Existing Conservation Areas should only be amalgamated or subdivided if there is a clear case that the proposed amendment more accurately reflects the appraised character.