

Blaby District Council
Council

Date of Meeting	21 May 2024
Title of Report	A proposed public consultation for a potential new Conservation Area in Braunstone Village. This is not a Key Decision and is on the Forward Plan
Lead Member	Cllr. Ben Taylor - Planning Delivery and Enforcement & Corporate Transformation
Report Author	Planning & Strategic Growth Group Manager
Strategic Themes	Enhancing and maintaining our natural and built environment

1. What is this report about?

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the potential of creating a new Conservation Area covering the historic village core of Braunstone, and to seek approval to proceed a public consultation.

2. Recommendation(s) to Council

- 2.1 To proceed to a public consultation on the potential designation of the Braunstone Village Conservation Area.

3. Reason for Decisions Recommended

- 3.1 To progress the motion made by Council in November 2021 to consider the merits of a Conservation Area in this location.

4. Matters to consider

- 4.1 Background

Context and History

On 23rd November 2021, following interest and research by local residents, a motion was passed by Council to consider the merits of a Conservation Area in this location and to work in partnership with Braunstone Town Council to assist with a public consultation and the preparation of a character appraisal.

Blaby District Council has since engaged in discussions with Braunstone Town Council and has enlisted the services of Leicester City Council's Historic Environment team to assess the potential for designation and advise on the necessary procedural matters. A Character Appraisal has been prepared along with a draft Management Plan to aid with the future upkeep and improvement of the area (Appendices A and B).

Evaluation of the proposed conservation area

Local authorities have the power to designate new conservation areas under Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. This requires that from time to time they determine which parts of their areas are of special or historic interest and should be designated.

As detailed in the Character Appraisal (Appendix A), there is considered to be a critical mass of surviving historic townscape, and that there is sufficient heritage significance to justify additional planning controls. The proposed boundary has been drawn in such a way to minimise the inclusion of properties that are of lower heritage significance, such as more modern or architecturally unremarkable buildings, however some of these are included to ensure that development in critical locations will be considered properly in terms of the broader townscape qualities of the area.

There is evidence of incremental change in this area, with the loss of more traditional building features and materials, as well as small scale developments that are more visually harmful. The area can be seen as being close to a tipping point in terms of this change, with the expanded permitted development rights for non-conservation area properties providing a heightened risk. Potential new planning controls that would come with conservation area designation are detailed in the draft Management Plan (Appendix B).

A new conservation area would help ensure new development was sensitive to the historic character of the area, but it would come with costs. An additional workload for the Planning Department would be created from planning applications relating to work that would otherwise have been permitted development, as well as conservation area guidance and potential planning enforcement on works that have become unauthorised. In addition, property owners will have additional costs relating to potentially preparing planning applications and/or potentially more expensive sourcing of higher quality materials for building repairs. However, research by Historic England has concluded that conservation area status can increase the value of properties.

To achieve broader efficiencies, the draft Management Plan proposes joint working with Leicester City. The existing Braunstone Village Conservation Area is located within the administrative boundary of Leicester City Council. The two areas are adjacent to each other and combine to cover the totality of the historic village.

Consultation

Although not strictly required by the relevant Planning Act, it is considered best practice to carry out public consultation on a potential designation. A 6-week consultation period is proposed, in line with comparable timeframes for similar projects. The Council would send letters and emails to local properties in the area and to other groups with an interest, and the Character Appraisal and draft Management Plan would be made publicly available. A public drop-in within the locality (venue tbc) will take place during the period. This will be facilitated by Braunstone Town Council.

It is expected that the consultation will be run to coincide with a consultation carried out by Leicester for a new character appraisal on the existing Conservation Area in Braunstone. This will allow improved and more efficient communications with the public, for example through the issuing of press notices.

4.2 Proposal(s)

That Council agree to proceed to a public consultation for a 6-week period (dates tbc).

Following the consultation and consideration of feedback, a further report will be prepared to go to Council to seek designation of the area, and will include a list of consultation responses with any actions taken as a result.

4.3 Relevant Consultations

None.

4.4 Significant Issues

In preparing this report, the author has considered issues related to Human Rights, Legal Matters, Human Resources, Equalities, Public Health Inequalities, and Climate and there are no areas of concern.

Consideration has been given to issues relating to Equalities. An Equality Impact & Needs Assessment has been completed for the proposal.

5. What will it cost and are there opportunities for savings?

- 5.1 There has been a fee of £5,427 to procure the services of Leicester City Council's Historic Environment Team to provide technical support including the preparation of the Character Appraisal and Management Plan.

No further significant costs are expected, only for the printing and posting of letters and press notices that will be required as part of the consultation process and associated notifications.

6. What are the risks and how can they be reduced?

6.1

Current Risk	Actions to reduce the risks
Consultation is carried out incorrectly or is incomplete	Close working with Leicester's Historic Environment team to ensure proposals are properly publicised and processes are followed. Continued liaison with Braunstone Town Council to raise awareness and facilitate consultation.

7. Other options considered

To not proceed to a public consultation

This could be considered contrary to the motion passed by Council to consider the merits of a conservation area in this location, as all views would not be fully taken into account. A decision would need to be made whether or not to continue work on the potential to designate, however the information informing this may be incomplete without community feedback.

- 7.1 In preparing this report, the author has considered issues related to Human Rights, Legal Matters, Human Resources, Equalities, Public Health Inequalities, and Climate Local and there are no areas of concern.

8. Environmental impact

- 8.1 The proposal may help preserve or enhance the historic environment in this area. No other significant environmental impacts identified.

9. Other significant issues

- 9.1 In preparing this report, the author has considered issues related to Human Rights, Legal Matters, Human Resources, Equalities, Public Health Inequalities, and Climate Local and there are no areas of concern.
- 9.2 An Equality Impacts Needs Assessment has been completed for this report and is included as a background paper.

10. Appendix

10.1 Appendix A – Braunstone Village Conservation Area Character Appraisal

10.2 Appendix B – Draft Management Plan

11. Background paper(s)

11.1 Equalities Impact and Needs Assessment (EINA)

11.2 Environmental Impact Checklist

12. Report author's contact details

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