

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE 12TH OCTOBER 1999

CONSERVATION AREA REVIEWS

ITEM 1

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SUMMARY

Under Section 69 of the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act, local authorities have a duty to periodically review Conservation Areas and their boundaries.

Over the past year, each of the Borough's twenty-five Conservation Areas has been analysed. The results were reported to the Conservation Council, the minutes of which are in the group offices and can be inspected at planning reception. Northwood, Eastcote Village, Eastcote Morford Way, Ruislip Village, Ruislip Manor Way, Harefield and those Canal Locks in the North of the borough were discussed at the March Environment committee and reviews of Cowley Church, Cowley Lock, Hillingdon Village, Ickenham Village, The Greenway, Old Uxbridge and West Drayton were discussed in June. This report sets out the findings of reviews of Harmondsworth Village, Longford Village, Botwell East Walk/ West Walk, Botwell Nestle Bulls Bridge, Cranford Park and Hayes Village for members' consideration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. That members note the minutes of the Conservation Council for the year, particularly in relation to Hayes, Harmondsworth, Longford, Cranford Park, Botwell Nestle, Botwell East Walk/ West Walk, Bulls Bridge and Hayes Village.**
- 2. That members approve the findings of the appraisal of each area and consider changes to the boundaries of the existing Conservation Areas as recommended within the report.**
- 3. That, subject to financial assistance from English Heritage, members authorise the production of detailed Conservation Area studies and/ or design guides for these areas to publicise the Council's conservation policies.**

BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Conservation Areas are designated to protect those areas considered to possess some "special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of**

which it is desirable to preserve or enhance." Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 states that Conservation Areas must be seen to justify their designation. As such, designation of a Conservation Area should not be seen as an end in itself and, as areas change through the years, it is important to be able to look at them again periodically, in the light of changing legislation, new development, new uses and other pressures.

1.2 The aim of the current review was therefore a clarification of the "special architectural and historic interest which led to the designation of each area, highlighting positive features as well as key problems. Important features of each area were analysed using the following headings:

1. History: how this has contributed to character
2. A general description of the appearance/character
3. Consideration of the boundary of each area.
4. Analysis of the following:
 - Buildings contributing and detrimental to the character of the area.
 - Trees and landscape which make a significant contribution to the area.
 - Key views to be protected or enhanced.
5. Potential policy topics.

1.3 The adequacy of existing boundaries is a particularly important consideration in the review process and cancellation of designation should also be considered where an area or part of an area is no longer considered to possess the special interest which led to the original designation. In some cases extensions may also be appropriate.

1.4 English Heritage Guidance on this point in Conservation Area Practice states that:

"Many early conservation areas were too narrowly drawn , for instance omitting the full extent of rear plots or closes, often of archaeological interest, which form part of the essential framework of an historic town or its Victorian or Edwardian phases of development which are now considered of worth."

The test should be whether the area concerned justifies the additional controls which designation brings or whether it is a matter of applying normal development controls in a way which respects the character and appearance of the nearby conservation area. This is of particular importance in view of policy BE4 of the Unitary Development Plan which states that:

'All new development within **or on the fringes of** Conservation Areas will be expected to preserve or enhance those features which contribute to their special architectural and visual qualities; proposals which involve the demolition or loss of such features will not be permitted.' As such, it may not be necessary to draw boundaries too widely as any development on the edge of a Conservation Area is also subject to this policy.'

1.5 Each of the borough's 25 Conservation Areas has therefore been analysed and the results discussed with and agreed by English Heritage. Presentations were also

made at various Conservation Council meetings throughout 1997, the results then being circulated to panel chairman for discussion with Conservation Area Advisory Panels. Following agreement by the Hayes & Harlington planning sub-committee a public consultation exercise has been undertaken over the past few months. Leaflets were delivered to all residents and businesses within Conservation Areas. Conservation panels have also been invited to give further comment.

CONSULTATIONS

Every resident within the following Conservation Areas:

Hayes Village, Botwell East Walk/ West Walk, Harmondsworth, Longford, Thorn EMI, Cranford Park, Bulls Bridge

- Hayes & Harlington Local History Society
- Harmondsworth and Sipson residents Association
- Botwell Tenants and Residents Association
- Lych Gate Walk Tenants Association
- Crane Ward Residents Association
- Harmondsworth, Longford and The Canal Locks Conservation Area Advisory Panels
- Nestles Avenue Action Group
- Nestle UK
- British Waterways
- London Borough of Hounslow
- The Friends of Cranford

THE NEXT STEP

1.6 This review process is particularly important and long overdue in Hillingdon where few of the Conservation Areas have had detailed appraisals carried out and the present research is a preliminary step towards the production of more detailed appraisals and design guides with the help of English Heritage.

1.7 The next step will involve considerable liaison with other Council departments, including Highways and Leisure services to work up proposals for enhancement of each area, including an assessment of signage, street furniture, parking and maintenance. This will be done in consultation with Conservation Area Advisory Panels.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

1.8 Any changes to the Conservation Areas will result either in the relaxation of controls or alternatively the imposition of controls where they did not exist previously.

RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

1.9 The report indicates that costs arising from the studies and production of guides will be funded by English Heritage. There should be no cost falling upon the Environment Committee. Funding to cover the cost of any other work will need to be considered at the appropriate time.

THE RESULTS

1.10 The next few pages set out the main results of public consultation. This is followed by a summary analysis of our findings for each area, responding to comments received and giving recommendations. A folder of all letters received as a result of consultation will also be available for members to view at the briefings and main meeting. A fuller analysis of each area is contained in the Conservation Council minutes.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Minutes of the meetings of Hillingdon Conservation Council

HAYES BOTWELL: NESTLE

History/ Character/ Appearance

The cocoa factory for Nestle, is just south of the railway and canal. It started as the Sandow Cocoa factory at the end of 1912. In 1919 the Swiss owned Hayes Cocoa Ltd took over and in 1929 the company merged with Nestle. Part of the early factory remains although there have been recent demolitions to create a new Boiler House, Cocoa Roaster and other equipment. The rest is Wallis Gilbert's creation set back behind well kept lawns with massive railings and gates imported from the Company's main works in Switzerland.

Today, behind the grass and trees, the buildings retain their character and appearance despite many changes. The canal-side is not particularly attractive because of the bankside fencing and the proliferation of shiny cylindrical metal tanks and needs redesigning in terms of hard and soft landscaping. The main elevation of the 1930s building is, however, impressive and there is a structurally daring canopy over former loading bays which in itself it is a contributory feature.

Boundary.

The boundary of the Conservation Area is the same as Nestle's site ownership. This is logical and no change is proposed.

RECOMMENDATION

No change to report.

Buildings

The buildings have all been described above and in the report to Conservation Council and are shown on the proposals map.

RECOMMENDATION

No change to report.

Trees/ Landscape/ Views

The front of the factory is important in landscape terms because of the green space and the trees. Existing trees and those just planted and those proposed in the future do or will contribute to the character. The canal-side needs redesigning in terms of hard and soft landscaping. Views from the east, the Hayes By-pass gives an unexpected, elevated view of the complex. At ground level, the main views are from the canal tow-path and along Nestle Avenue with a particular axial view by the ornamental gates.

RECOMMENDATION

No change to report.

Policy/ Proposals

For the Nestle site it is important both to encourage the success of the company whilst preserving and enhancing the special architectural and historic character of the area.

RECOMMENDATION

No specific recommendation.