

**REPORT FROM THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT TEAM LEADER TO AREA 1
COMMITTEE 16TH NOVEMBER 2005**

GREAT SOMERFORD CONSERVATION AREA

1. Purpose

- 1.1. To inform the Committee of proposed changes to the Great Somerford Conservation Area boundary, and provide an update of progress to the Great Somerford Village Design and Conservation Area Statement.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. The Design and Estates Team Leader consults Great Somerford and Little Somerford Parish Councils on the proposed changes to the Great Somerford Conservation Area boundary and reports to the Public Spaces and Local Plans Panel with a proposed Conservation Area designation.
- 2.2. The Committee notes the progress to the Great Somerford Village Design and Conservation Area Statement.

3. Links to the corporate/business area objectives

- 3.1. Community Aim 3.4: Conservation Area designation and Conservation Area Statements conserve and enhance the District's built environment and landscape setting, to protect and promote the local distinctiveness of North Wiltshire's heritage.
- 3.2. Business Area Common Objectives: Progressing the Great Somerford Village Design and Conservation Area Statement will maintain performance against the agreed Urban Design work programme 2005-6.

4. Background Information

- 4.1. The 'pilot' joint document of Little Somerford Village Design and Conservation Area Statement (VDS/CAS) was adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Local Plan in July 2002. Following this officers met with the Great Somerford Village Design Group in October 2002 and work began on a similar draft joint document for Great Somerford.
- 4.2. Changes in planning legislation has meant that if planning guidance such as Village Design Statements (VDS) or Conservation Area Statements (CAS) is to be adopted, they must now be programmed as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) whereby the public consultation process is now more clearly defined. A second draft of the working document is currently in progress and, subject to adequate resourcing, it is planned to publish a draft document in Summer 2006 with potential adoption by the end of 2006.

5. Current Position

- 5.1. Under the Planning Acts it is the duty of a planning authority “from time to time” to review parts of their area that are designated as Conservation Areas. The research carried out to produce Conservation Area Statements often provides new information and analysis that suggests that the existing Conservation Area boundary should be altered. Conservation Areas are designated for special architectural or historic interest alone. However, it has been the policy of the District Council to consult the relevant Town or Parish Council prior to designating any change of Conservation Area boundaries.
- 5.2. All the proposed changes to the Great Somerford Conservation Area boundary are indicated in Appendix 1.

Analysis of the existing Conservation Area and its immediate environs suggested a number of potential additions to the Conservation Area as follows:

A: Land in and around Station House. The site of the former Somerford railway station complex and the land adjacent to the west used as a site for village events both lend themselves to inclusion because of their social and historical importance to the village. There is also a WW 2 defence line along the northern bank of the River Avon that is included in this area and contains a Pillbox similar in size to the one situated by the weir on the east side of the road to Little Somerford. The railway ‘complex’ consists of; the remains of the old ‘pre-station’ road, the approach road to the station and arches under, the old Station House, the embankment for the sidings and branch line, and the arches to the north-west which provide field-to-field farming access. The show field has a line of trees to the north forming a natural boundary for the Conservation Area the whole being a strong visual link from the church and the site of castle nearby. There is a narrow stream or drain on the west side of the field and a hedge and tree line along the former railway line both forming natural boundaries.

B: Land associated with the Free Gardens (allotments). This is an area of historic significance nationally as the allotments known locally as the Free Gardens appear to be the first example of what eventually became a facility found in most villages, towns and cities in this country. An act of Enclosure or Inclosure of 1806 led to their establishment in 1809. This fact alone should warrant their inclusion in the Conservation Area, and they also provide a visual link with the open countryside on the south side of the settlement. The physical continuity of the Free Garden boundaries combined with the value of this amenity to the village also argue strongly for their inclusion in the Conservation Area.

C: Land around Dautsey Road. Many of the allotments for individual cottages identifiable on the Inclosure 1809 map are within Dautsey Road. Additionally, some of the houses on Dautsey Road have are noted to be of merit and the value of the visual links with the hinterland of the village should also be taken into consideration as a factor in extending the Conservation Area. The historic allotment boundaries serve to define the Conservation Area extension here, and there are also natural boundaries formed by field

boundaries to the south and the rear boundaries of the properties adjoining the Dauntsey Road.

D: Hollow Street, Old School and Long Acre. Hollow Street contains some of the oldest buildings in Great Somerford, particularly the old school and the cottages now modified to form a house called Long Acre, which refers to the surrounding area of land also mentioned in the Inclosures Act.

The above extensions serve to extend the Conservation Area to entirely surround some of the more recent developments which are currently not designated, including those at Manor Park, Paddock Close and Winkins Lane. Whilst there is little of significant historic or architectural interest within these areas (apart from what remains of the avenue of horse chestnuts from West Street north-eastwards) they are entirely surrounded by areas of interest and significance and are therefore a direct setting for them, and would benefit from both preservation and enhancement.

Appendix 2 gives further references and detail for the above proposed additions to the existing Conservation Area.

5.3. The proposed changes will extend the Great Somerford Conservation Area into the parish of Little Somerford, and it is therefore proposed that both parish councils be consulted regarding the proposals.

6. **Financial Implications**

6.1. None.

7. **Human Resources and Equal Opportunities implications**

7.1. Progressing the Great Somerford VDS/CAS and consequent boundary review is within the Urban Design work programme and therefore progressing them will have no impact upon internal human resources. The Design and Estates Team are currently making arrangements to seek new staff for the Urban Designer post which was vacated in July 2005.

8. **Community and Environmental Implications**

8.1. Conservation Area designation and Conservation Area Statements conserve and enhance the District's built environment and landscape setting, to protect and promote the local distinctiveness of North Wiltshire's heritage for the community.

Documents Used in Preparing this Report

Draft Great Somerford Village Design & Conservation Area Statement: September 2003.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Draft Proposed Great Somerford Conservation Area Boundary Nov 2005

Appendix 2: Notes on Great Somerford Boundaries and Conservation Areas, 31.10.05

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