



Leicester
City Council

CABINET

10th March 2003

**Supplementary Planning Guidance:
South Highfields Conservation Area Character Statement**

Report of the Service Director, Planning & Sustainable Development

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Report

This report advises members of the results of a consultation exercise undertaken in respect of the preparation of a character statement for South Highfields Conservation Area and seeks Cabinet's approval for the adoption of the attached character statement as supplementary planning guidance to the City of Leicester Local Plan.

The South Highfields Conservation Area was designated in April 1981. An Article 4 Direction, which means that planning permission is required to make alterations which affect the external appearance of properties, was declared at the same time.

The character statement identifies those factors which make South Highfields worthy of its special status as a conservation area. It proposes that the boundary of the conservation area be re-drawn to delete three streets, Churchill Street, Connaught Street and Hamilton Street from the Conservation Area, since it is considered that these streets no longer possess sufficient architectural interest to warrant their inclusion. Cabinet is requested to approve the deletion of these three streets from the Conservation Area and the area covered by the Article 4 Direction. Cabinet is also requested to approve the removal of properties on Welland Street from the area covered by the South Highfields Article 4 Direction, although it is proposed that the street remains within the Conservation Area.

If Cabinet approves these recommendations, notification will have to be given to the Secretary of State and details advertised in the London Gazette and Leicester Mercury. There is, however, no further need for consultation or recourse for objection.

FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

1. Financial Implications

None

2. Legal Implications

None

3. Other Implications

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/NO	Paragraph Within Supporting information	References
Equal Opportunities	Yes	6	
Policy	No		
Sustainable and Environmental	Yes	7	
Crime and Disorder	No		
Human Rights Act	No		
Elderly/People on Low Income	No		

4. Background Papers - Local Government Act 1972

South Highfields Conservation Area draft character appraisal, October 2002

City of Leicester Local Plan, 1994.

5. Consultations

Ward Councillors

The Conservation Area falls within two wards, Castle and Wycliffe. Ward Councillors were provided with a draft of the character statement and no comments were received.

Director of Cultural Services and Neighbourhood Renewal – The City Archaeologist and the Trees & Woodlands manager provided background information.

Conservation Advisory Panel

The Conservation Advisory Panel recommended that the draft character statement be endorsed.

Residents and interested parties

A letter was sent to all properties within the conservation area inviting comments on the conservation area as well as offering copies of the draft statement. An exhibition explaining the purpose of the conservation area and inviting residents' views on the controls which apply within the area was held at Sparkenhoe Community Primary School, Saxby Street for one week in October 2002. Residents' views were particularly sought on the proposal to remove Churchill Street, Connaught Street and Hamilton Street from the conservation area.

The exhibition was attended by approximately 25 people. Visitors to the exhibition were invited to complete comments sheets, seven of which have been returned. In addition, eight individual letters have been received.

The comments that were received are summarised below:

- recognition of the architectural value of the area and support for the conservation area;
- the need for grants to repair original features such as windows and doors;
- recognition of the importance of trees and concern at the loss of trees within the area;
- greater supervision should be undertaken by the Council to identify breaches of the Article 4 Direction;
- problem of uncollected rubbish/fly-tipping in the area;
- problem of car parking in the area;
- poor quality repair work on properties in the area;
- lack of publicity for the existing conservation area and the restrictions which apply.

Five letters were received from property owners of the three streets that are suggested for removal from the conservation area. Four of these support the removal of their properties from the conservation area. Two other residents supported the idea by completing comments sheets. One resident of Hamilton Street opposed the idea, stating that the streets are unique to Highfields and should be preserved as an example of “social housing”. The objection goes on to say that residents’ who have adhered to the restrictions would be penalised due to the Council’s failure to enforce the Article 4 Direction and compensation should be paid for loss of value. Two visitors to the exhibition also opposed the suggested boundary change, commenting that it would signal support to people who had detrimentally altered their properties.

Responses to the issues raised

The majority of people who responded support the aims of the conservation area and recognise the value of the restrictions imposed by the Article 4 Direction in preserving the character and appearance of the area. With regard to the comments received in respect of Churchill Street, Connaught Street and Hamilton Street, I consider that the architectural and historic interest has been so eroded by alterations that have been made to properties that their inclusion within the conservation area is no longer justified. There is no provision for compensation for residents who consider themselves to be adversely affected.

Some of the issues that have been raised are not related directly to the character appraisal but have been forwarded to the relevant sections of the Council. The possibility of offering building repair grants in conservation areas is something that I recognise as being important if the character of the area is to be preserved and is something that could be considered in forthcoming financial years should resources become available.

In response to the comment about a lack of publicity for conservation areas, particularly where an Article 4 Direction has been declared, I would advise that, as part of a wider initiative, leaflets are being prepared which will be sent to all properties, explaining the restrictions which apply.

6. Equal Opportunities

The aim of the character statement is to maintain the quality of the environment of the South Highfields area to the benefit of all residents.

7. Sustainability and Environmental Implications

The character statement is intended to reinforce the attractiveness of the area as a place to live and thereby encourage the upkeep and use of buildings.

8 Officer to contact

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