



Preparing conservation area appraisals: guidance for Parish & Town Councils

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Hart District Council (HDC) supports any Parish or Town Council that wishes to update a conservation area appraisal (CAA).
- 1.2 The purpose of this document is to clarify the process and explain how HDC will support that process.
- 1.3 We would welcome feedback on this note so that it can be improved and updated over time. Please contact planningpolicy@hart.gov.uk .
- 1.4 This guidance does not cover the technical aspects of preparing a conservation area appraisal. For that, please see [Historic England Advice Note 1 Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management](#).

2. What is a conservation area appraisal?

- 2.1 CAAs are important documents used by local planning authorities, the Planning Inspectorate, developers, homeowners, and the public.
- 2.2 A CAA defines the special interest of the conservation area that merits its designation and describes and evaluates the contribution made by the different features of its character and appearance.
- 2.3 A good appraisal will consider what features make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of the conservation area, thereby identifying opportunities for beneficial change or the need for planning protection. The appraisal should also develop a management plan that responds to the area's significance and issues.
- 2.4 The appraisal should convey the information succinctly and in plain English, accessible to all users.
- 2.5 All CAAs in Hart district are available at [Conservation areas | Hart District Council](#)

3. Who can draft a conservation area appraisal?

- 3.1 Conservation area appraisals are technical, evidence-based planning documents which need to withstand scrutiny at planning appeals. The expectation is that the Parish or Town Council will appoint an appropriately qualified technical consultant unless there is sufficient expertise in-house.
- 3.2 HDC cannot recommend or provide a list of specific consultants, nor can it indicate likely costs. You may therefore wish to talk to other Town or Parish

Councils that have commissioned appraisals. The Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC) provides a directory of members on its [website](#).

4. Support from Hart District Council

- 4.1 HDC will provide a named Officer from the Planning Policy & Economic Development Team as a single point of contact.
- 4.2 The HDC Officer will provide strategic advice on process and content. They will review draft appraisals, benchmarking against the Historic England advice and examples of best practice. They will also provide a template and respond to enquiries in a helpful and timely fashion.
- 4.3 HDC will adopt the CAA at the earliest opportunity, subject to it reaching the appropriate standard, and having gone through the correct process.

5. What does the process look like?

- 5.1 **Appendix 1** provides an overview of the process, particularly the links between the Parish/Town Council and HDC, and some indicative timescales.
- 5.2 In drafting the appraisal the advice within [Historic England Advice Note 1 Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management](#) should be followed, including the need for a visual survey of the conservation area.
- 5.3 It could take 12 to 18 months to complete, depending on various factors including the size and nature of the conservation area, the capacity of those doing the work, and the level of response to consultation.
- 5.4 For its part HDC will endeavour to meet the indicative timescales provided at Appendix 1.
- 5.5 HDC requests regular updates on the progress of the appraisal so it can plan adoption into the Cabinet work programme well in advance.

6. Public consultation

- 6.1 Public consultation on a draft appraisal is an important part of the process and should result a more robust document.
- 6.2 Preferably public consultation takes place *after* the HDC has confirmed that it is satisfied with the consultation draft. This will reduce the risk of changes being requested by HDC after the consultation.

- 6.3 It is sensible to prepare a consultation strategy in advance, explaining what will be done to publicise the appraisal and engage the community. This will help when finalising the CAA which will contain a section on the community engagement that took place. HDC is happy to review the consultation strategy.
- 6.4 HDC does not prescribe any particular approach to the consultation, other than to meet the legal requirement for a 'public meeting' (see 6.12), and to notify owners in writing if they are directly impacted by any changes to the boundary or any proposals for new non-designated heritage assets (see 6.13 and 6.14).
- 6.5 It is recommended talking to those Parish or Town Councils that have gone through a CAA consultation process themselves for any lessons learned.
- 6.6 You are reminded to comply with General Data Protection Regulations when undertaking consultations.

Publicity

- 6.7 The draft appraisal should be available on your website with hard copies at appropriate locations.
- 6.8 Details on how and when residents can respond to the consultation will need to be clear.
- 6.9 You can make full use of existing communication channels to reach your residents. Newsletters, social media, and posters could be used to advertise the consultation.
- 6.10 HDC will publish a link to the Parish or Town Council consultation on its [consultation page](#) and notify Parish/Town, District and County Councillors through the Councillor Connect e-newsletter.

Public Meeting

- 6.12 It is a legal requirement to submit the draft appraisal for consideration to a public meeting in the area to which they relate, and for the local planning authority to have regard to any views expressed by persons attending the meeting (see [Section 71\(2\) and 71\(3\) of the Planning \(Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas\) Act 1990](#)).

Notifying property owners directly

- 6.13 If the appraisal includes a proposed change to the conservation area boundary, each of the residents affected by the change should be contacted directly in writing and given the opportunity to comment. The letter should explain the implications of the boundary change as it will create a new land charge for their property.
- 6.14 Similarly, if it proposed to identify buildings and features as non-designated heritage assets, the owners of those properties should be contacted, with the

implications made clear, and invited to comment. Further information on non-designated heritage assets is available at [Historic environment - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk).

Analysing the feedback

- 6.15 All consultation responses, including issues raised at a public meeting, need to be collated and a response provided for each separate point raised. This will demonstrate an open, transparent process. To see how this can be set out see the example [Odiham and North Warnborough Conservation Area schedule of consultation responses](#).
- 6.16 Preparing this schedule, and making the corresponding changes in the appraisal, needs to be done carefully and can be time-consuming. However, it demonstrates that the comments have been properly considered and results in a more robust and accurate appraisal.

7. Examples in Hart district

- 7.1 The [Odiham and North Warnborough Conversation Area Appraisal](#) was adopted in November 2022, and is a useful reference (see [Cabinet papers](#) Item 67).
- 7.2 Crondall, Crookham Village and Hartley Wintney are expected to be adopted in 2024.

8. Formatting and accessibility

- 8.1 Adopted CAAs are published on the HDC website. They must therefore meet the required Web Content Accessibility Guidance (WCAG) accessibility standards and have the appropriate look and feel.

Template

- 8.2 To assist in the layout of the appraisal HDC has produced a 'Word' template available from the named HDC officer.
- 8.3 The font to be used is Arial.
- 8.4 Text should always be left aligned for maximum legibility and should be the following size:
- headings - Arial Bold at a minimum size of 20pt (on A4/A3 documents),
 - introduction paragraphs - Arial Regular at a minimum size of 14pt (on A4/A3 documents),
 - sub-headings - Arial Bold at a minimum size of 12pt (on A4/A3 documents),

- body text - Arial Regular at a minimum size of 12pt (for A4/A3 documents).

8.5 Not all the chapters and subheadings in the template may need to be populated – this will depend on the characteristic and the special interest of the conservation area.

Maps and photographs

8.6 Graphic presentation (including maps and other annotated images) is both engaging and more accessible for users. It also usually results in a more succinct document. Other forms of presentation might include annotated photographs or drawings of buildings and characteristic local details.

8.7 Including maps or sketches to illustrate each of the areas of special interest and their character analysis is strongly recommended. Specifically, maps which illustrate key periods in the area's history and highlights the survival of those historic elements which have determined the form of the conservation area today (for instance, a medieval road pattern, former defensive lines, watercourses, canals, railways, burgage plots or other significant boundaries, estate walls, formal layouts, and the relationship of buildings to open spaces) should be used. Supporting text can summarise how the settlement has developed and a list of publications and other sources describing local history may be helpful.

Accessibility

8.8 The regulations on digital accessibility apply to all public sector bodies. The appraisal must meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). For further guidance see [Understanding WCAG 2.2 - Service Manual - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/42426/Understanding_WCAG_2.2_-_Service_Manual_-_GOV.UK.pdf). You should be mindful that these guidelines can change over time.

8.9 Accessibility checkers in applications such as Word and Adobe can be used to ensure documents are accessible when drafted. The accessibility checkers identify issues and provide guidance to amend these issues.

8.10 A common issue raised is the failure to correctly label maps, tables, and photos in the document. Guidance on labelling can be found online, for example: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/tutorials/images/>.

Appendix 1: Overview of the process

- A1. Indicative times set out below are subject to leave/sickness/existing commitments.
- A.2 Timeframes are also dependent on the parish town council scheme of delegation and calendar of meetings to gain formal approval.

Stage	Description	Indicative timescale
1. Start of process	The Parish/Town Council appoints a consultant (if needed) and informs HDC that they plan to start work on a conservation area appraisal: contact planningpolicy@hart.gov.uk A named HDC officer is assigned to the project and working timeframes are agreed between both parties.	A named HDC officer will be allocated to the project within 2 weeks of HDC being notified.
2. Inception meeting	To ensure all parties (the parish/town council, the consultant and the district) have a shared understanding of the process, expected timescales and any initial queries are addressed.	The HDC officer would be happy to attend an inception meeting within 3 weeks of receiving the request.
3. Prepare first draft	The first draft is prepared in line with the HE guidance . Send draft to HDC for review	Depends on several factors particularly capacity/resources but likely to be between 2 and 6 months.
4. HDC feedback	HDC reviews the draft and provides comments in writing.	Comments provided within 6 weeks of receiving the draft.
5. Amend draft CAA (if required)	The Parish/Town Council considers HDC's comments and makes required changes. The HDC officer would be happy to attend a meeting to discuss issues raised.	Depends on capacity/resources and the scale of changes needed.
6. Pre-consultation approval	HDC's named Officer checks and confirms the revised draft is ready for consultation.	Up to 4 weeks depending on the scale of changes to review.

Stage	Description	Indicative timescale
7. Public consultation	See section 6 for guidance. It is recommended that the consultation period lasts at least 6 weeks, potentially longer if there is an overlap with school holidays.	At least 6 weeks for the consultation itself, excluding preparation time.
8. Addressing consultation responses	The Parish/Town Council set out in a schedule all comments received (summarising where necessary) and the decision on how to address each point made (see Odiham example). Make sure there is an accurate read-across between the schedule and the CAA.	Depends on comments received and capacity/resources.
9. HDC review the revised draft	HDC reviews the comments received through the consultation and the changes to the appraisal made as a result. If HDC has any comments they will be provided within 4 weeks.	4 weeks
10. Final check	If Parish/Town Council feel it would be helpful, HDC officer checks comments have been properly addressed before any formal decisions.	2 weeks
11. Parish/Town Council formal approval	Once both parties are happy with the document, the town/parish council takes the final draft to their Council meeting for approval.	Depends on Parish/Town Council calendar of meetings.
12. Adoption	HDC adopts the CAA at the next available Cabinet meeting. <i>HDC requests regular updates on the progress of the appraisal so it can plan adoption into the Cabinet work programme well in advance.</i>	This may not necessarily be the first Cabinet meeting after receiving the final version bearing in mind lead-in times for reports and whether there is capacity on the agenda.

Stage	Description	Indicative timescale
<p>13. Statutory notifications - if there has been a boundary change.</p>	<p>If the appraisal includes a change to the CA boundary, then Cabinet approval is also required to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • notify the Secretary of State and Historic England, • publish the designation of the Conservation Area by a notice placed in the London Gazette and a local newspaper. <p>HDC will then carry out these actions.</p>	<p>4 weeks</p>