

Caxton Avenue Potential Conservation Area public meeting

Date: 01/02/2023.

Location: Microsoft Teams online meeting and the Committee Room, Civic Centre, Station Road, Addlestone, KT15 2AH.

Meeting start: 6:30pm.

Attendees:

Michael Corbett (MC) (Senior Planning Policy Officer, Runnymede Borough Council)

Georgina Pacey (GP) (Local Plans Manager, Runnymede Borough Council)

8 local residents-4 on MS teams and 4 who attended the meeting in person

Presentation

MC gave a presentation to those present (please see the attached) setting out:

- the area that the proposed Conservation Area (CA) would cover;
- some basic statistics about CAs in England;
- The main impacts of designating a CA; and
- Some of the detail of Policy EE5 of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan (Conservation Areas) which would apply to future planning applications in the area if the CA is designated.

Property prices

MC was asked if an increase in property price was guaranteed if the CA was designated. MC advised that this could not be guaranteed, and that property prices (and whether they increase or decrease because of a planning decision or designation) are not a material consideration in the planning system. Therefore planners (and the Planning Committee when deciding whether to designate this potential CA), would not take this into account when making decisions.

Potential restrictions on properties

It was also asked if more detail could be provided on the restrictions that would be imposed on properties in the CA, particularly in relation to ability to make changes to the front of the property, e.g., changing the front door, installing a ramp, having a porch put on the front etc to help with energy efficiency and access to the property. Would these types of changes require planning permission or would this still be able to be done under permitted development rights (PDRs) / not require planning permission.

MC advised he would investigate this. As set out in the presentation, some PDRs are removed when a CA comes into effect, but not all are.

It should be noted that the Council can put Article 4 Directions on properties to further restrict PDRs (and this can be done in areas that are not in CAs, as well as in CAs), although the Council currently has no plans to do this in the proposed CA at Caxton Avenue.

Trees

MC advised that all trees that have a trunk diameter of 75mm at 1.5m above ground level would be automatically protected by the CA designation. Residents / the Resident's Association would need permission from the Council to undertake works to trees.

Where a tree is dead residents / the RA would need to give five days' emergency notice to the Council before the works are undertaken. Where a tree is imminently dangerous, the work can be done as required to make the situation safe and then send the same details to Council as is required by a five-day notice for dead trees.

It was asked if the trees that are protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) that are adjacent to her property (but would be outside the proposed CA) would have additional protection because of the CA designation. MC advised not, as the TPO designation is a higher level of protection than that offered by the CA, as the CA designation simply requires 6 weeks' notice to be given before any tree works are carried out in the Conservation Area. The local authority can reply by providing a TPO or by allowing the work to go ahead. As it is not an application for consent, it cannot be refused or accepted with conditions. Conversely, a TPO is a specific (and higher level) of protection as it picks out specific trees that are particularly worthy of being protected.

It was also asked if residents / the RA would need permission from the Council to remove branches where they are close to / rubbing up against the power lines that run through the area. MC contacted the Council's Tree Officer who has advised:

'In a Conservation Area the exemptions to the need to serve notice are, if the tree has a stem above 75mm at 1.5m from the ground, the same as with a TPO application. In the case of electricity wires, if the work is carried out by on the behalf of the electric company as a statutory provider, the work would be exempt. If the electric wire is just a wire internal to a property beyond the meter and not part of the providers network (e.g., serving an outbuilding) then notice needs to be served to the Council as normal.'

Generally, I would not recommend that a resident prunes trees away from wires outside their property which are part of the supply network and doing so without instruction from the provider would indeed require notice as you are not acting for them. In my experience statutory providers will not ask a resident to prune trees away from their wires. The contractors who do it on their behalf have to be specially qualified and will inform the supplier where they are working on the network. When a line is earthed and the system tripped, electric companies will normally turn the supply back on three times before they go out and check what the problem is. Railways have the same procedure.'

Additional feedback on the CA proposals / additional queries about the designation

A number of queries were raised during the meeting, primarily relating to potential effects / restrictions on properties, and the ability to undertake hedge maintenance arising from the potential designation of the CA. Residents asked for further clarification as to what restrictions would be brought into effect. MC agreed that the Council would investigate what restrictions would be applied if the CA comes into effect and provide this additional information to residents.

There would, alongside this provision of additional information, be a further period where comments on the proposed designation could be submitted to the Council for consideration before the proposed designation is taken to the Council's Planning Committee.

Implementation process

It was asked how long it would take for the CA designation to come into effect if it is agreed by the Council. MC advised that arrangements would need to be made with other Council departments, e.g., the Land Charges, Development Management, Trees, and GIS teams to ensure mapping and other records have been amended, and there is awareness of the new

designation. Therefore, there would be a slight delay from the date the Council agrees any potential designation and it coming into effect, e.g. if it were to be agreed on the 15th of any given month, it might come into effect on the 1st of the following month. This would be set out in the report taken to the Council's Planning Committee.

Actions and next steps

The potential designation of the Caxton Avenue Conservation Area will no longer be taken to the meeting of the Planning Committee on the 15th February 2023.

Further information about what restrictions are placed upon residential properties arising from a CA designation, as well as works to trees / hedges will be collated and subsequently disseminated to residents. As part of this set of information, a new deadline for written comments about the potential designation will be set out.

MC will collate any additional comments received and prepare a revised statement of consultation that will be presented to Councillors alongside the report setting out the officer's recommendation in relation to the potential designation of the CA. The date for this will be confirmed nearer to the time.

Meeting end time: 7:40pm