

Cabinet
Wednesday 2 November 2022

Comments from the Overview and Scrutiny Commission
at its meeting on Monday 31 October 2022
OSC/306

1. Cabinet Agenda Item 6 – Proposals to Introduce New Conservation Areas and Change Existing Conservation Area Boundaries

Comments and Recommendations

The Commission considered report [PES/419](#) of the Head of Economy and Planning. During the discussion with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development, Head of Economy and Planning, Senior Planning Officer and Principal Planning Officer, the following comments were made:

- Recognition that Conservation Area designation would enable the Council as Planning Authority to work with developers, stakeholders and planning applicants to preserve and enhance Crawley's New Town character as a real design asset to attract investment and improve the quality of the business and living environment in Crawley Town Centre.
- Acknowledgement that there were advantages to the implementation of the Conservation Areas:
 - The proposals would give additional parts of the borough nationally recognised status as heritage assets.
 - The proposals would be expected to have positive economic effects overall. There was likely to be some additional costs for developers/site owners associated with development in the Conservation Areas (e.g. planning application fees). It was, however, considered that these would be more than offset by the overall scheme and effects of a more distinctive, higher quality and carefully managed environment, which would ultimately be more attractive to residents, visitors and investors.
 - The environmental impacts were considered to be positive overall, and this was further clarified, as by encouraging the re-use and repurposing of existing elements of the built fabric, Conservation Area designation would promote the efficient use of the carbon embodied in buildings within the Conservation Areas.
- However, it was also recognised that there were some changes that would be required should the proposal be granted, including:
 - The regulations and permission required for certain types of work to a property, including cladding of the external walls of houses and works to trees, are different in conservation areas.
- Without a Conservation Area, there was a risk of inappropriate development with poor quality design, potentially as a result of permitted development rights in the Town Centre. It was noted that Conservation Areas were mainly a facilitator for protecting and enhancing historic environments, regeneration and restoring planning controls, which would ultimately enhance Crawley's identity.
- Explanation was sought on the Article 4 Direction (non-immediate) process, which can only be adopted following a consultation period, with at least 12 months' notice of it coming into force and is subject to central government agreement. It was noted that Conservation Area designation does not take away all permitted development rights. There were still legal implications to be adhered to, but the implementation of the proposals would help to secure the preservation and enhancement of Crawley's historic environment in accordance with legislation, national planning policy and best practice.
- It was noted that as part of the consultation whilst there was endorsement for the proposal, some responses were not supportive and had raised concerns regarding heritage significance. It was queried if there was risk that additional controls could deter investment.
- Acknowledgement that similar Conservation Areas existed within other towns and these establishments had resulted in additional opportunities to bid for significant grant funding for heritage-related regeneration and improvements.
- It was remarked that there was a small number of 20th century conservation areas in the UK and 11 were established in Crawley.
- Recognition that communication with stakeholders, partners and developers was key as this would result in improved quality designs and also investment. Clarification was sought as to the original objection from the Town Centre BID and the current status. It was remarked that there was an ongoing dialogue between the

two parties. It was requested that a confirmed response regarding the Town Centre BID's position be obtained for the Cabinet meeting.

- Concerns were raised about any risks associated with the proposals, (eg stakeholders, investment, public perception) should be documented. It was moved by Councillor Lanzer (seconded by Councillor T Belben) that a risk assessment document be compiled containing risks and mitigations in relation to the proposals. A vote was taken and upon being put to the Commission, the proposal was declared as carried.

RESOLVED

That the Commission noted the report and requested that the views expressed during the debate, were fed back to the Cabinet through the Commission's Comment sheet, with the additional recommendation above.

Councillor T Belben
Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Commission
31 October 2022