

Conservation Area updates, June 2021

We have taken the agreed next step in the possible application for Conservation Area status.

The Heritage Consultant, Graham Keevill, toured all the village on 13th April 2021 walking and being driven around from Tar Wood to High Cogges and everywhere in between. He was accompanied at various times by Graham Soame, Dick Pears, Martin Spurrier and Gary Nicholls.

After meetings and adjustments, his final report will be received shortly by the Conservation Area sub-committee and this will be presented to the Parish Council at its meeting in July. If the Parish Council approves it, it has been agreed that it will be disseminated to the village and a decision will be taken by the Parish Council, based on a final consultative poll of the village, whether to make an application to West Oxfordshire District Council for Conservation Area Status.

Dick Pears, June 2021

Conservation Area Recap and Progress

After the Parish Council Poll on 1st December 2020 when 64% of the voters decided (with 27% disagreeing and 8% being undecided) (the figures have been rounded) that “the Campaign Group should prepare a draft application for Conservation Area status (with options, e.g. boundaries etc.) for the Parish of South Leigh including High Cogges, for consideration by the Parish Council and Parish residents and to be voted on by residents in due course”, the following initial steps have been taken:

Heritage Consultant

The Campaign Group had a meeting by zoom on 23rd January 2021 between Graham Keevill (GK), a Heritage Consultant, and Gary Nicholls, Martin Spurrier and Dick Pears. Graham Soame had been invited to attend as a PC representative but could not do so but was sent a formal note of the meeting.

There was a summary given to GK of where the village was at and the detailed and extensive prior consultation that there had already been with meetings, fact sheets distributed and the poll on 1st December 2020.

Conservation Area / Neighbourhood Plan?

One of main points of this initial meeting with GK was to ask whether there were advantages in having a conservation order in addition to a Neighbourhood Plan. He said

it was sensible to have both if you could and that the advantages of a conservation order over a Neighbourhood Plan were threefold:

1. A conservation order gives 'statutory' protection whereas a Neighbourhood Plan is 'advisory'.
2. A Neighbourhood Plan is time-limited whereas a conservation order is permanent.
3. A Neighbourhood Plan can be interpreted at the whim of a local authority whereas that is not true of a conservation order.

Costs

We had established in earlier email exchanges that GK's overall costs would be about £2000 + VAT and in subsequent discussions between the three of us on the Campaign Group we thought we should allow a contingency amount of £3000 + VAT to include all the potential costs to be on the safe side.

It may be that we will be able to claim back the VAT.

Next Steps

We asked GK to take us through the process and he suggested that he would like a "walk round the village" with him being supplied with all the material that had already been collected. Martin agreed to do that and get it to him. We suggested March/April for the walk round when lockdown restrictions might have been lifted. The cost of that first stage (consideration of documentation and walk round) would be about £600 + VAT. Informal fund raising has now taken place and there are funds in place for that stage - independent of Parish Council resources.

There was also discussion about which areas of the Parish might be included and the themes of that discussion were (1) the application should be inclusive rather than divisive and (2) the landowners needed to be protected, if that were possible.

Thereafter the process would involve GK writing a draft report which he thought would take him only about 3-4 weeks.

Martin Spurrier, February 2021

[Read More](#)

Conservation area poll

Poll results

From: The South Leigh Parish Council

To: All Parish residents

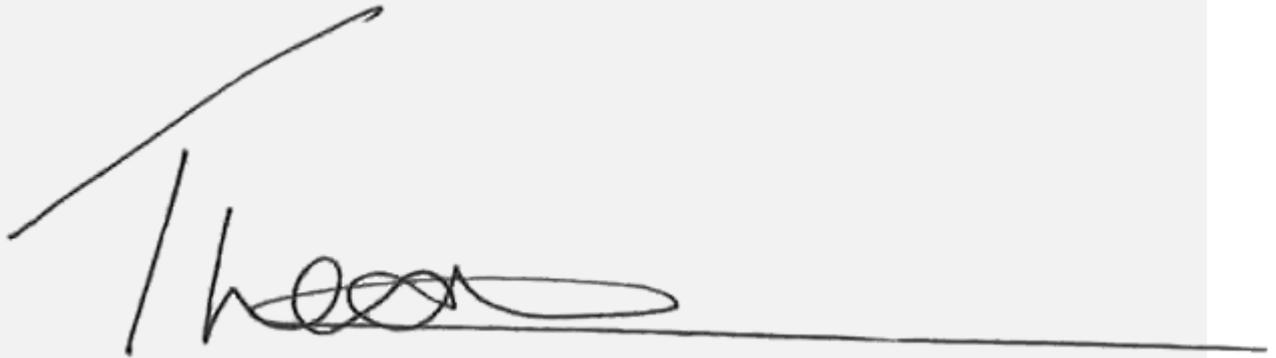
Please find below the result of the village poll conducted between noon on Tuesday, 24 November and 11:00pm Monday, 30th November 2020.

The question asked was:

Do you agree, disagree, or remain uncommitted to a proposal that the Campaign Group should prepare a draft application for Conservation Area status (with options, e.g. boundaries etc.) for the Parish of South Leigh including High Cogges, for consideration by the Parish Council and Parish residents and to be voted on by residents in due course?

The number of people who polled is shown in the table below.

	Number	Agree	Disagree	
Online	108	66	31	
Polling box	31	23	7	
Total	139	89	38	
%age proportion of total number of people who polled	100%	64.028%	27.338%	

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Thea', is written across the bottom of the table and extends to the right.

The motion was carried.

Counted by Tammy Heavens, Clerk, South Leigh Parish Council, and witnessed by Martin Spurrier on 1st December, 2020.

Nicky Brooks, Chair, South Leigh Parish Council

**Clarification to the [announcement made by the conservation group](#) re. the poll.
Please read.**

You may have read the latest announcement from the Working Group. There has been some confusion as to the exact role of this group and I now wish to clarify this.

The Working Group does not necessarily express the views of the Parish Council. For clarity in the future, the Working Group is to be renamed the 'Conservation Area Campaign Group'.

We, the Parish Council, have expressed no opinion on whether we support or not the application to become a Conservation Area but rather feel that it is our role to present to you, in equal measure, both the positives and negatives and ask you to vote in the poll so that we can ascertain your views.

To this end, the following presents both the pros and the cons as the Parish Council sees them whilst asking that you look at the links provided by the group to do your own further research.

Pros

The Conservation Area would provide further protection to the allotted area in the way the group detailed and will help protect and preserve both the look and feel of our village - the buildings and the landscape. It falls alongside our Neighbourhood Plan but whilst the Neighbourhood Plan needs revising in line with the local planning guidelines every 15 years or so. A conservation area, once set, is there for life.

Cons

It would mean further restrictions on what you can do to your own property without applying for planning permission. The planning application process costs money, will inevitably add a time delay and more bureaucracy. You may need to apply for planning permission for things that are a given at the moment - examples include changing windows, erecting satellite dishes as well as small extensions (normally allowed under permitted development rights) as well as the cutting down of trees over a certain size on your property.

It is up to you to decide which of the options holds most importance to you. Remember that this poll is simply asking for your permission to investigate further. A full report will then be produced and a final vote taken.

Please take the time to vote in our poll by 11.00pm on Monday, 30th November. It's important to the future of our village.

Nicky Brooks, Chair South Leigh Parish Council, (23.11.2020)

More useful information

We urge every resident to familiarise themselves further with Conservation Areas, the pros and the cons. Here is some relevant information from our District Council and Historic England:

- [WODC Conservation Area design guide](#)
- [WODC Conservation Area maps](#)
- [WODC Historic Buildings and Conservation](#)
- [Historic England - Conservation Area Appraisal, Design & Management](#)
- [Historic England - What is a Conservation Area?](#)

Paper from the 29th January 2020 meeting, South Leigh Village Hall chaired by Amanda Howard - A discussion on the pros and cons for a Conservation Area:

Advantages

- Protection from developments
- Supports the Neighbourhood Plan
- Protecting the countryside
- Protecting development
- Good for nature conservation
- Enhance the value of property
- Ensure properties are in keeping with character of the area
- Planning needs a stronger case
- Protect ancient fields and hedgerows
- Protection for larger trees
- Control over lighting, i.e. floodlights
- No satellite dishes on front of properties
- Encourage biodiversity
- Power to maintain unoccupied buildings

Disadvantages

- Loss of development rights
- Extra level of permissions to maintain area
- Additional permissions for ongoing tree works
- Possibly more difficult to sell property
- Limits needed housing development
- Planning permission need stronger case
- Permission needed for demolition over 115 cubic metres
- Need to apply for removal of a front facing hedge
- Potential to skew development on owner's property, i.e. if front not accepted then rear build
- Limited farmers' extended development rights