

Conservation Area Report to the Village

The Conservation Area Group (CAG) reported to the Parish Council at its meeting on 28th February 2022.

CAG had prepared a document setting what had happened since the issue was last before the Parish Council (the PC) – which was 13th July 2021 where the PC had agreed unanimously that after the circulation of the Heritage Consultant's report, a pre-application meeting with WODC should be arranged.

The Heritage Consultant's report ("the report") was sent to WODC and a meeting was requested. Despite reminders over a number of months Phil Shaw of WODC responded by email only relatively recently and in effect said that an application for the whole of the Parish would not succeed and said, considering the report

1. The proposed area is far too widely drawn and encompasses diverse housing clusters and then areas of field merely because they sit between the areas of housing - but which do not in themselves contribute to the architectural or historic character of the settlement
2. There are too many areas of undistinguished housing set amongst the more characterful houses for a discernible character to be identified.
3. Extending the area to be incorporated merely so that it doesn't upset anyone is not a tenable approach.
4. The diverse spread of listed buildings ensures that the key buildings and their settings are already protected
5. The planning status of South Leigh as a small village in the Local Plan where development is highly limited by policy OS2 provides further protection
6. Those buildings which are not listed but which have a discernible character (e.g., the cottages in Station Road close to the Mason Arms on the playing field side of the road) could be incorporated into a revision of the Neighbourhood Plan as non-designated heritage assets without the need to confer Conservation Area status on the remainder of the settlements This is the option being taken by Milton under Wychwood Parish Council who had also previously considered Conservation Area status.

The CAG took advice on 6) and was advised that would only be possible in a new or revised plan submitted to an inspector and subject to a further referendum.

The Conservation Area Group remains committed, should the village decide that a Conservation Area is appropriate, to push for as much of the area of the parish to be within that status as is possible. This may necessitate us to apply for three or more distinct areas so that the remaining parts might gain protection by association.

As a consequence the Conservation Area Group sought from the PC permission to: 1. Advise residents of the current situation. 2. Revert to the Heritage Consultant in order to re-configure our pre-application for re-submission,

We will re-submit it in the light of WODC's comments and the expert's advice.

Permission to 1 and 2 were agreed and the CAG will revert to the Heritage Consultant and keep the village informed.

CAG

15 March 2022