

 <b>Executive – 13 March 2013</b>		<b>Agenda Item No.</b>  <b>7</b>
<b>Title</b>	Conservation Area for Poor Clares Convent, Baddesley Clinton.	
<b>For further information about this report please contact</b>	Alan Mayes Telephone No: 01926 456545	
<b>Wards of the District directly affected</b>		
<b>Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006?</b>	No	
<b>Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number</b>	N/A	
<b>Background Papers</b>	Baddesley Clinton Conservation Area File	

<b>Contrary to the policy framework:</b>	No
<b>Contrary to the budgetary framework:</b>	No
<b>Key Decision?</b>	No
<b>Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)</b>	No
<b>Equality &amp; Sustainability Impact Assessment Undertaken</b>	No (If No state why below)
Not necessary at this stage.	

Officer/Councillor Approval		
Officer Approval	Date	Name
Chief Executive/Deputy Chief Executive	11.02.13	Bill Hunt
Head of Service	11.02.13	Tracy Darke
CMT		
Section 151 Officer	11.02.13	Mike Snow
Monitoring Officer		
Finance	11.02.13	Jenny Clayton
Portfolio Holder(s)	11.02.13	Councillor John Hammon
Consultation & Community Engagement		
This report is to report the response to public consultation.		
Final Decision		Yes
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)		

## 1. **SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report is to seek approval to designate a new Conservation Area to include Poor Clares Convent and St Francis RC Church, Baddesley Clinton.

## 2. **RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 That the Council approves the designation of Poor Clares Convent and St Francis RC Church, Baddesley Clinton as a Conservation Area (as outlined on Appendix A).
- 2.2 That appropriate notifications are carried out of the new designation.

## 3. **REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 The area which includes the Poor Clares Convent and St Francis RC Church is considered to be of a character worthy of preservation under the terms of Conservation Area designation. Conservation Area designation will ensure a level of protection to the buildings and also ensure appropriate consideration is given to development affecting the site.
- 3.2 A history and evaluation of the site is attached at Appendix B. The Poor Clares order now have only one sister resident at the Convent and have decided to sell the property. The consequence of this is that the buildings are at risk and could be demolished. The buildings have been put forward for statutory listing however after consideration English Heritage have decided that they are not of listable quality however they do form an interesting group of 19<sup>th</sup> Century buildings together with St. Francis RC Church. In order to preserve the character of this part of Baddesley Clinton it is proposed that a Conservation Area be designated in accordance with the plan shown on Appendix A.
- 3.3 Following the approval of the Council's Executive on 12 December 2012, public consultation was carried out and only letters of support have been received including the Parish Council. No letters of objection have been received. A report on the response to the public consultation is attached as Appendix C.

## 4. **POLICY FRAMEWORK**

### 4.1 **Policy Framework**

- The Planning (Listed Building Conservation Areas Act 1990) makes provision for the review of Conservation Areas and for recommendations to be made for extended or new Conservation Areas to be approved by Local Authorities subject to public consultation.
- Warwick District Local Plan makes provision under DAP8 Protection of Conservation Areas for the designation of new Conservation Areas and review of existing Conservation Areas as appropriate.

### 4.2 **Fit for the Future**

The designation of the Conservation Area will directly help to protect the environment of the district, in accordance with the SCS aims to protect the built environment.

## **5. BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK**

- 5.1 The designation of a new Conservation Area will have no direct budgetary impact. There will however be a need for Conservation Area Consent Applications to be made for any demolitions within the Conservation Area and for appropriate notifications and an advice leaflet to be prepared. These can be accommodated within the current budget framework. Also there would be a possibility that buildings within the Conservation Area could be eligible for grant aid. This would not have a significant impact on the current budget.

## **6. ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S) CONSIDERED**

- 6.1 An alternative would be to not consider the area for designation as a conservation area. The result of this would be the possible loss of the complex of buildings which makes up the Poor Clares Convent.

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## **Proposed Conservation Area for Poor Clares Convent and St Francis Church, Baddesley Clinton**

### **Extent of proposed conservation area**

The area of Baddesley Clinton under consideration is that currently occupied by St Francis Church and associated churchyard, presbytery buildings and the site occupied by the Poor Clares Convent and former school building, all currently enclosed by a brick wall. There is currently no proposal to include any other domestic properties within Rising Lane or any agricultural land adjacent to the convent buildings.

### **Historical Background**

Baddesley Clinton House, now a National Trust property, was the home of the Ferris family who remained within the Catholic faith after the Reformation. By the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, Baddesley Clinton House had become the headquarters of the Franciscan Fathers of the Second English Province and by 1756 Father George Bishop had established a small chapel on the site of the present Convent, a permanent mission which was independent of the Ferris family home. It was later joined by a Franciscan School which had moved out of Edgbaston. The Franciscan Academy closed in 1829 and since that time the church has been served by secular priests. In 1850 a group of Poor Clares arrived from Bruges to establish the first convent of the Poor Clares of the Colletine Reform in England since the Reformation. In 1857 Agnes Mary Clifford, daughter of the honourable Charles Clifford of Chudley in Devon, had joined the Poor Clares and brought with her a substantial dowry and this money was used to build a new church, presbytery and school on land given by the Ferris family. The original chapel was demolished and the new church of St Francis Assisi was designed by Benjamin Bucknell in partnership with the Coventry Architect, T I Donnelley and was opened in 1870. The south range of the sisters lodgings was added in 1878-9, the architect is unknown for this work. The presbytery was built in 1882 to designs by Edward Hanson and by 1905, two further ranges of Convent buildings had been added (as shown on the map of 1905). In 1909, a lean-to corridor from the servers sacristy to the church was extended to provide access to the sanctuary and nave and at the same time the original access door in the southern corner of the sanctuary arch was blocked and the Sacred Heart altar placed in front of it. In 1962-65, a side chapel was added to the north side of the church to enable the sisters to see Mass being celebrated in the church. The inside of the church underwent some alterations in 1970, covering most of the decorative work which had been carried out by Rebecca Orpen. Various 20<sup>th</sup> century extensions were made to the convent buildings to enable them to be more functional. The most notable alteration was to the south wing which had an infill bay added and various other alterations. A fire in 1983 caused further damage to the sisters cloister which was later repaired. The school building was occupied until 1990 and the building then converted for office use. In 2010 the Poor Clares marked their 160<sup>th</sup> year at Baddesley Clinton but as the community is now too small to sustain the use of such a large complex, the convent buildings will cease to be used for that purpose, and the presbytery, together with the sisters choir, will remain in the use of the parish church.

The church is in an early English style with simple lancet windows built in brick with stone dressings. The sisters choir is denoted by a slightly lower roof line and there is a timber spirelet. The sanctuary and choir have circular openings housing quatrefoil windows. The Presbytery to the west is brick built with bay windows and octagonal chimneys. The convent buildings were built generally round a cloister of two storeys

with a single storey lean-to forming the cloister in red brick. Within the original cloister is a projecting canted bay with a former entrance porch on the opposite side now enclosed by a modern projection. Within the north side of the main range of buildings is a two storey canted bay with a complex roof structure. A similar projection exists on the east side. The buildings, although simple, have stone dressed windows and are broken up by the various canted projections. To the north west is the original entrance gate which formed the access to the outside world and gave access both to the grounds of the convent and also the main door into the convent, being in the side of the archway. The southern range, formerly the infirmary, is a very simple range of buildings, probably the latest to be added to the 19<sup>th</sup> century complex which has subsequently been altered, probably at the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century and also later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the infill block was added between the two wings.

With the exception of the southern range, most of the Convent buildings and the Presbytery remain as originally built, with any major alterations being carried out in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There are, however, a number of 20<sup>th</sup> century single storey additions which could be removed to return the building to its original form. The property also has a significant number of UPVC windows. The presence of UPVC windows does detract from the quality of the buildings, however, with such a large complex under single control, it would be possible for these windows to be removed and replaced with more sympathetic windows at a future date.

The whole range of buildings are enclosed by a wall which rises to a wall around 2m in height to the north east and part south elevation enclosing the convent grounds. Within the convent grounds are a number of mature trees and lawned areas including an area occupied by the sisters cemetery. There is also, within the wall of the convent grounds, a small chapel building for contemplation, which is a further attractive feature.

The Church of St Francis of Assisi is also set within a burial ground to the south and east and similarly to the south and west where there are significant mature trees and shrubbery. To the west is the access to the presbytery and the former school buildings which are more visible from the public road than the convent buildings themselves.

The whole complex is a significant group of buildings of the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century that were built as a parish church, school and a convent with interlinked functions. Single occupancy of the convent buildings has clearly retained them in a largely unaltered form. The majority of alterations, with perhaps the exception of the south range, are reversible in terms of restoring the character of the buildings. The grounds to the convent and the church are maintained to an attractive standard and retain a number of significant mature trees.

## **Character of the Area**

The area has remained in the single usage; since most of the buildings were constructed the character has been largely retained. The nature of the use as a convent has maintained the grounds which are largely enclosed. Historically, buildings or complexes of buildings which have been retained in single use, for instance a large industrial complex, a large school or hospital complex, or in this case a religious community, are examples of our heritage which should be retained in some form. The present complex of buildings under consideration has been put forward for statutory listing, however English Heritage have considered them and are not of the opinion that statutory listing would be appropriate partially due to the number of

architects and unknown designers used on the site which does not provide an outstanding complex warranting statutory protection. However, the historical context and the built forms that have been created do form an interesting architectural survival which, together with the grounds, it is considered would be worthy of conservation area status, both from a historical and architectural context.

### **Consideration for conservation area status**

The criteria within the Planning (Listed Buildings Conservation Areas) Act 1990 for Conservation Area Designation is: "an area of special architectural, historic, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance". The recent National Planning Policy Framework also states that conservation areas should be worthy of their designation and ensure that an area justifies such status because of its special architectural or historic interest and that the concept of conservation area is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest (paragraph 27 of section 12 of the NPPF).

St Francis Church and Poor Clares Convent buildings are clearly of historical significance and represent a largely unaltered collection of late 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings set within their own grounds, all of which are largely intact. The various alterations to the convent buildings are largely reversible and are not of a scale to distract significantly from the historical layout and simple architectural qualities of the buildings. It is therefore considered that the area identified on the accompanying plan is worthy of designation as a conservation area.

Alan Mayes  
Principal Architect Planner

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A period of public consultation was carried out from 9 January 2013 to 6 February 2013 with 47 letters being sent to local residents – none of which will actually be within the conservation area boundary and other interested parties including the Diocese of Birmingham, English Heritage, and the Parish Council.

Five responses were received which included three residents, English Heritage, and the Parish Council. English Heritage felt there was a strong case for designation. The chairman of the Parish Council responded on their behalf having carried out an informal consultation of members as there was no meeting in the consultation period. Quoting from the Chairman's letter:

"We held the view that these buildings are of considerable historical importance and are very significant to the character of the village. Indeed they could be said to define the character of the village itself. The loss of these buildings should that ever occur, would forever impoverish the landscape and be a significant loss to the character of the area as well as the loss of something of historical importance."

Both letters received from neighbouring residents were supportive of the proposed designation. A proposal was made in one response to further investigate the history of the site as this may support a future proposal for statutory listing and clarification was sought on the status of designation, which is greenbelt. Some suggestions were also made regarding parking and tree planting.

Although only a small percentage of responses have been received, they are all very supporting of conservation area designation.

In terms of the non-responses, it must be assumed that they had no particular views and particularly did not oppose it.

It is therefore considered that as no objections have been raised within the consultation period, the proposed designation is acceptable.

Alan Mayes  
Principal Architect Planner