

Rodmersham Church Proposed Conservation Area

Rodmersham Parish Council supports the proposal for the area around Church Street as a Conservation Area as it has all the special qualities befitting a conservation status and therefore should be designated a Conservation Area. Just to be clear Rodmersham is a collection of hamlets and settlements; Rodmersham Green, Church Street/St Nicholas Church, Upper Rodmersham, Dungate, Pitstock and Highsted Valley are all part of "Rodmersham".

We would like to add the following comments to this document which we hope will be considered when the decision is made.

The farmland (with the orchard) adjacent to St Nicholas Church is a key part of the setting of church. The Lord of the Manor (GH Dean) has allowed visitors and users of the church to park on the farmland next to the church yard. Over the last few years, the boundary between the church yard and the farmland has been removed, this has created an openness and when standing in either the church yard or the farmland it is difficult to distinguish either, creating a borrowed landscape. We therefore feel strongly that at the very least, part of the adjacent field should be included inside the conservation boundary. We fear that the car-park may become more heavily hard landscaped which would detract from the visual appearance of the setting of the Grade I Listed Church. The setting of the church is vital to this hamlet.

The kerbing referred to p23 (plate 21) has been installed to prevent vehicles eroding the soft landscaping that has just been planted with bulbs. If the conservation officer has any suggestion as to how this landscaping can be better protected we would welcome their advice. Posts and bollards at this location have not worked to date.

Ashgores House---We feel very strongly as a Parish Council that Ashgores House should be included in the Conservation Area. Whilst it may not be listed, it is an attractive period building that is seen, and often commented upon, as the first house in Rodmersham and is visually the gateway into the hamlet and the Rodmersham area. This is then reinforced as the village welcome sign is adjacent to Ashgores house. The welcome sign "Rodmersham....please drive slowly" is deemed by most villagers to be the beginning of the Rodmersham settlement but also the hamlet on Church Street. Its prominence is obvious in the landscape. The fields between Ashgores House and the next property is relatively small, given the large open expanse of agricultural land around; the rolling hills and valleys with far reaching views --all the way to Sheppey ,Whitstable and beyond. The boundary of Ashgores House is totally in keeping with the rest of the Rodmersham settlement, it has hedges, trees and gates.

We feel strongly that there should be mention of Rodmersham Court Farm. This settlement,--the large listed house --Rodmersham House ---with adjacent listed farm complex, including stables, dog kennels and barns was the home to the Lord of the Manor. The house and estate have taken responsibility for the surrounding farmland and for the church. The relationship between the estate and the church can be evidenced with the

presence of the Mercers grand Memorial in the church yard. Most recently the occupants have contributed significant sums towards the church repairs.

If you look at the estate fencing i.e. the ironwork fencing- p23 (plate 21) -it is all around the Rodmersham settlement in both directions along Church Street, including up to the front wall of the church. Until recently there was an ancient cherry orchard beside the churchyard. Unfortunately this historic orchard was removed and replanted with modern dwarf apple stocks.

We feel the estate complex should also be part of the Conservation Area. We acknowledge there is a gap between it and the church, however, they together still form the settlement—this settlement is completely isolated from any other,— but is commonly accepted by visitors and villagers alike. The estate still owns the majority of the properties in the Church Street hamlet—farm workers cottages etc.

We should like to also point out Church Farm House – (previously Eagle Lodge and Matsons) is all that remains of Church Farm, a significant fruit farm for over a century.

We do agree with other comments that this area should be called the Rodmersham Church Street Conservation Area and not just Rodmersham Church Conservation Area due to the many listed /graded buildings in this vicinity.