

Rodmersham Green Conservation Area Review

A presentation to the Western Area Committee by:

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Presentation Format

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2. Legislative & policy/guidance framework
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Management Plan
6. Next steps
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1. Background to review

- Rodmersham Green Conservation Area was originally designated in September 1974.
- There has been no formal, comprehensive review of its appropriateness/fitness for purpose in over 40 years, although this scenario is unfortunately not unusual across the whole of England...
- There is a formal requirement under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 for Conservation Areas to be reviewed from '*time to time*'.
- The Swale Heritage Strategy, adopted in March 2020, has resulted in a stronger commitment by the Council to ensure its conservation areas are reviewed more regularly and possible new conservation areas also given consideration.
- The review of Milstead, Rodmersham Green and Tunstall conservation areas was not included in the work programme of the initial 3-year action plan forming part of the adopted Swale Heritage Strategy 2020 - 2032
- The focus on conservation areas in the initial action plan has been limited to those conservation areas in the Borough classified locally and nationally as 'at risk' – of which there are 8.
- The review of Milstead, Rodmersham Green and Tunstall conservation areas has been brought forward and prioritised however in order to assist the Council in developing a more informed view on the impacts of the Highsted Park major development scheme which it is anticipated would impact to some degree on the setting of all three.

2. Legislative & Policy Framework for Conservation Areas and their review

Legislation & National Planning Policies

- Conservation Areas first introduced by the Civic Amenities Act, 1967
- Note: early Conservation Areas in England designated by County Councils or predecessor local authorities prior to local government re-organisation in 1974 originally designated between 1970 and 1976.
- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990 (the Act).
- Formal requirement of the Act for Conservation Areas to be reviewed from '*time to time*'.
- Section 69 of the Act defines Conservation Areas as '*an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*'.
- National Planning Policy Framework, 2021 (chapter 16 re the Historic Environment)
- National Planning Policy Guidance, 2014 onwards

National Guidance & Local Policy/Guidance

Historic England Guidance (including)

- Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management (Historic England Advice Note 1 – 2nd Ed.), 2019
- The Setting of Heritage Assets (Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 – 2nd Ed.), 2017

Local Level Policies & Guidance (including)

- Adopted Swale Local Plan, 2017 (Bearing Fruits)
- Emerging Replacement Local Plan (Reg. 19 stage)
- Conservation Areas Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)

3. Purpose, Status and Benefits of Appraisal Documents

Purpose of Appraisals

- To identify the heritage significance of the Conservation Areas to this and future generations – the significance may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic (or a combination).
- To increase public awareness and involvement in preservation and enhancement of the area.
- To provide a framework for planning decisions, to guide positive change and regeneration.
- To provide the necessary background to, and framework for a review of the Conservation Areas boundaries in accordance with Section 69(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
- To highlight particular issues and features which detract from the character or appearance of the Conservation Areas which offer potential for enhancement or improvement through positive management.

Status and Benefits of Appraisals

Status

- Forms part of a suite of local planning guidance that has been subject to and agreed following a formal public consultation process.
- Provides a material planning consideration of significant weight in the development management process and this is backed up by linked, adopted and replacement Local Plan policies.

Benefits

- Stronger position for managing development proposals (applications and appeals).
- Sound basis for partnership working between stakeholders to tackle identified issues threatening/impacting on the special character and appearance of the conservation area.

4. Consultation Process

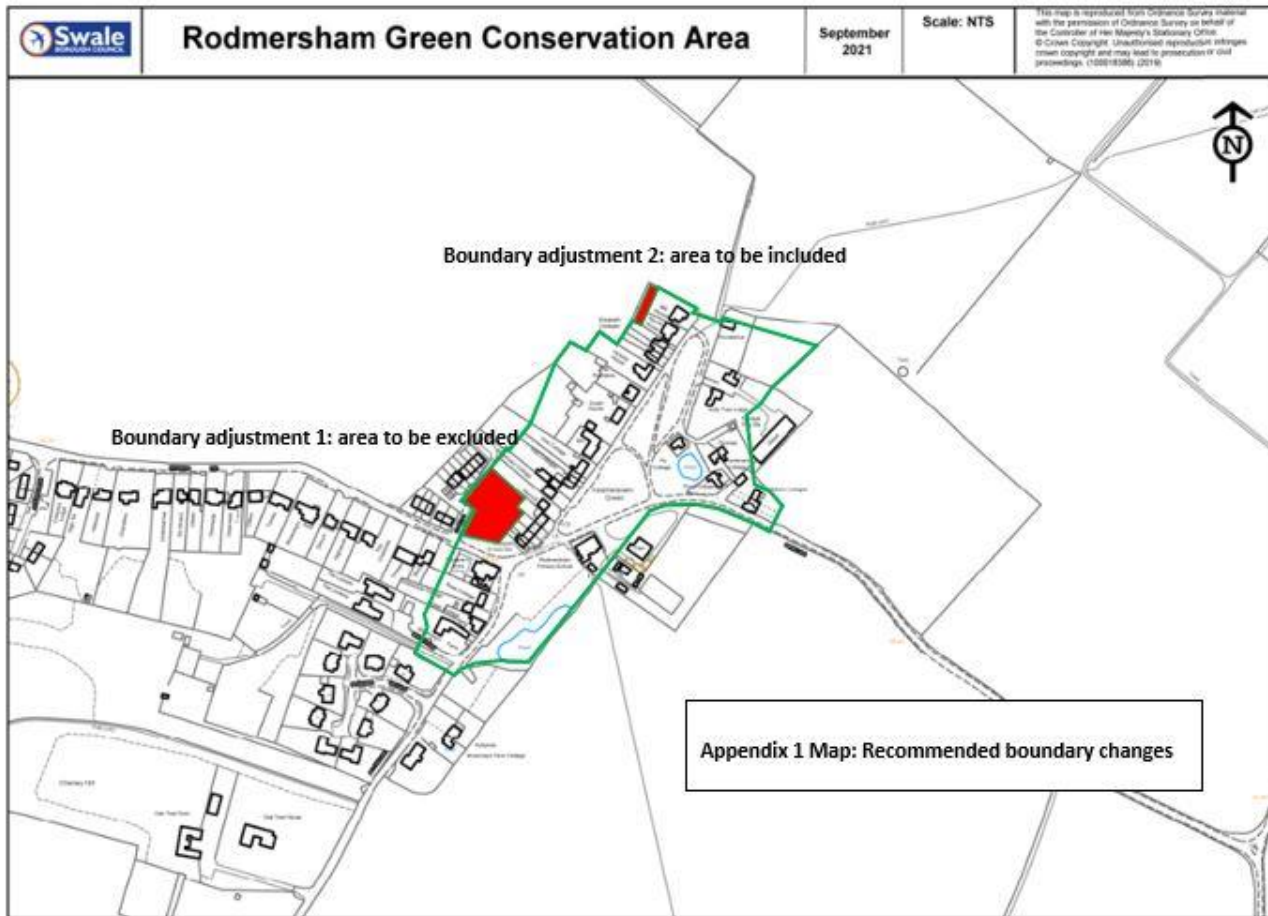
- The public consultation is now closed, but has taken place in accordance with the Borough Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)
- A 6-week public consultation period was provided to comment on documents
- Documents were available to view on SBC website + hard copies at Sittingbourne Library and for Rodmersham Green residents, on request from the parish clerk.
- Notification letters were sent to those directly or indirectly affected by proposed boundary changes and posters advertising the public consultation posted on parish notice board, at Swale House and at Sittingbourne Library
- Historic England and Kent County Council were formally consulted.
- The feedback received is in the process of being carefully considered, will be reported on and may result in further changes being made to the appraisal document

5(a) Rodmersham Green Conservation Area: Summary of Heritage Significance

- A small settlement which originated as a farming community in the medieval period
- A manorial history which gave rise to the green which provided grazing rights for the commoners.
- The architectural contribution made by several listed buildings and some notable non-designated buildings.
- An eclectic mix of traditional building styles, forms and building materials.
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- Boundary walls, railings and fences being a defining feature
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- The strong historic, visual and functional link between the settlement and its surrounding landscape, in particular the views which connect Rodmersham Green to Rodmersham and the parish church and the more distant views across the landscape.
- The green spaces between and around buildings which bring the countryside into the village
- The contribution which mature trees make to the character and appearance of the village



5(b) Rodmersham Green Conservation Area: Proposed Boundary Changes (1)



5(b) Rodmersham Green Conservation Area: Proposed Boundary Changes (2)

Boundary adjustment 1

- Currently the boundary follows the middle of Fruiterers Close, so the bungalows to the east of the close are included within the conservation area and those to the west are not.
- None of the bungalows are of architectural or historic significance, so the proposal is to exclude numbers 12 to 17 (consecutive) from the conservation area and to redraw the boundary line along the back gardens of numbers 1 to 6 St. Patrick's Row.

Boundary adjustment 2

- There is a minor irregularity in the line at the rear of Mill House and Ainslie House where the current boundary does not follow the line of the current gardens.
- The adjustment is proposed simply to reflect current circumstances.

5(c) Rodmersham Green Conservation Area: Other Boundary Changes Considered

OPTION 1:

- Consideration was given to extending the conservation area to the south along Bottles Lane to include the area of the former farm, now The Barn.
- However, most of the historic farm buildings and the farmhouse have long been demolished.
- The Barn is visually and spatially separated from the green by modern development at Hollyside and Brownings Orchard on the west side of Bottles Lane and a pair of modern houses on the east

OPTION 2:

- Consideration was given to Church Road and the cluster of buildings around St Nicholas Church in Rodmersham itself.
- This area has a good concentration of listed buildings and other heritage assets. It also forms part of the civil parish of Rodmersham and there has always been a strong connection between Rodmersham Green and Rodmersham.
- However, Court Farm is 0.6km from Rodmersham Green and St. Nicholas Church is 1km away.

5(d) Rodmersham Green Conservation Area: Proposed Management Plan (1)

Public realm enhancement opportunities:

- An audit of public signage (including highway signage) to establish whether all current signage and road markings are necessary, well designed and appropriately located.
- An audit of street furniture (bollards, benches, dog waste bins, salt bin etc.) to establish whether street furniture is necessary, well designed and appropriately located.
- An audit of overhead supply lines and poles with the statutory undertakers to establish whether there is scope to remove any overhead cables or poles or to underground services.
- The removal of concrete highway kerbs and their replacement with grassy verges.
- The grass area to the west of 6 St Patricks Row (1) is poorly designed and would benefit from better design and landscaping.
- The forecourt to the Fruiterers Arms (2) and the bottle bank offer considerable scope for improvement.
- Ongoing 'light touch' management of the ponds.

5(d) Rodmersham Green Conservation Area: Proposed Management Plan (2)

Landscape and ecology enhancement opportunities:

- An audit of trees, hedgerows, green spaces and orchards may be undertaken to establish whether there is any scope for better management or for future planting
- Positive management may occasionally involve the removal of trees to preserve, restore or open up significant views. The reduction in height of the tall hedge in front of Holly Tree Lodge has been identified as a potential enhancement.

6. Next Steps

1. The work on taking this review forward has had to be delayed due to the heavy workload of the Council's Conservation & Design Team (of just two officers), but it is anticipated that the Council's Local Plan Panel will consider and provide feedback on the appraisal document at its meeting in March 2022, as part of the consultation process
2. Comments on the appraisal document received within the consultation period have already been largely considered and documented. It is likely that some changes will be made to the documents as a result, although this is still under consideration.
3. Any final changes to be made to document (reflecting consultation comments made) will be drawn up ASAP, and it is anticipated that a report will be produced recommending adoption of the document for development management purposes by the Council's Cabinet at its final meeting in April..
4. It's anticipated that the appraisal & management plan document will be adopted no later than the end of May 2022.
5. Following the adoption of the documents, meetings can take place between the Borough Council, the Parish Council, and any other relevant parties to initially discuss and then scope the nature and extent of work required to take forward the management plan guidelines and other possible actions. This will be subject to sufficient officer resource being available to do so.

Thank You For Listening

Any Questions?

