

Tunstall Conservation Area Review

A presentation to the Western Area Committee by:

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Presentation Format

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1. Background to review

- Tunstall Conservation Area was originally designated in April 1973.
- Although the boundary was reviewed and amended in February 2003 when the conservation area was redesignated, there has been no formal, comprehensive review of its appropriateness/fitness for purpose in over 40 years,
- 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 Tunstall residents, on request from the parish council chairman.
- 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) Tunstall Conservation Area: Summary of Heritage Significance (1)

- A small settlement historically centred on the Medieval Church of St. John the Baptist, Tunstall House and Hales Place.
- The winding eccentricity of Tunstall Road
- The architectural contribution made by several listed buildings and some notable non-designated buildings and structures.
- The architectural contribution made by several listed buildings as well as some non-designated buildings and structures.
- The eclectic mix of traditional building styles, forms and building materials. The frequent occurrence of flint and 17th century brickwork is particularly noteworthy.

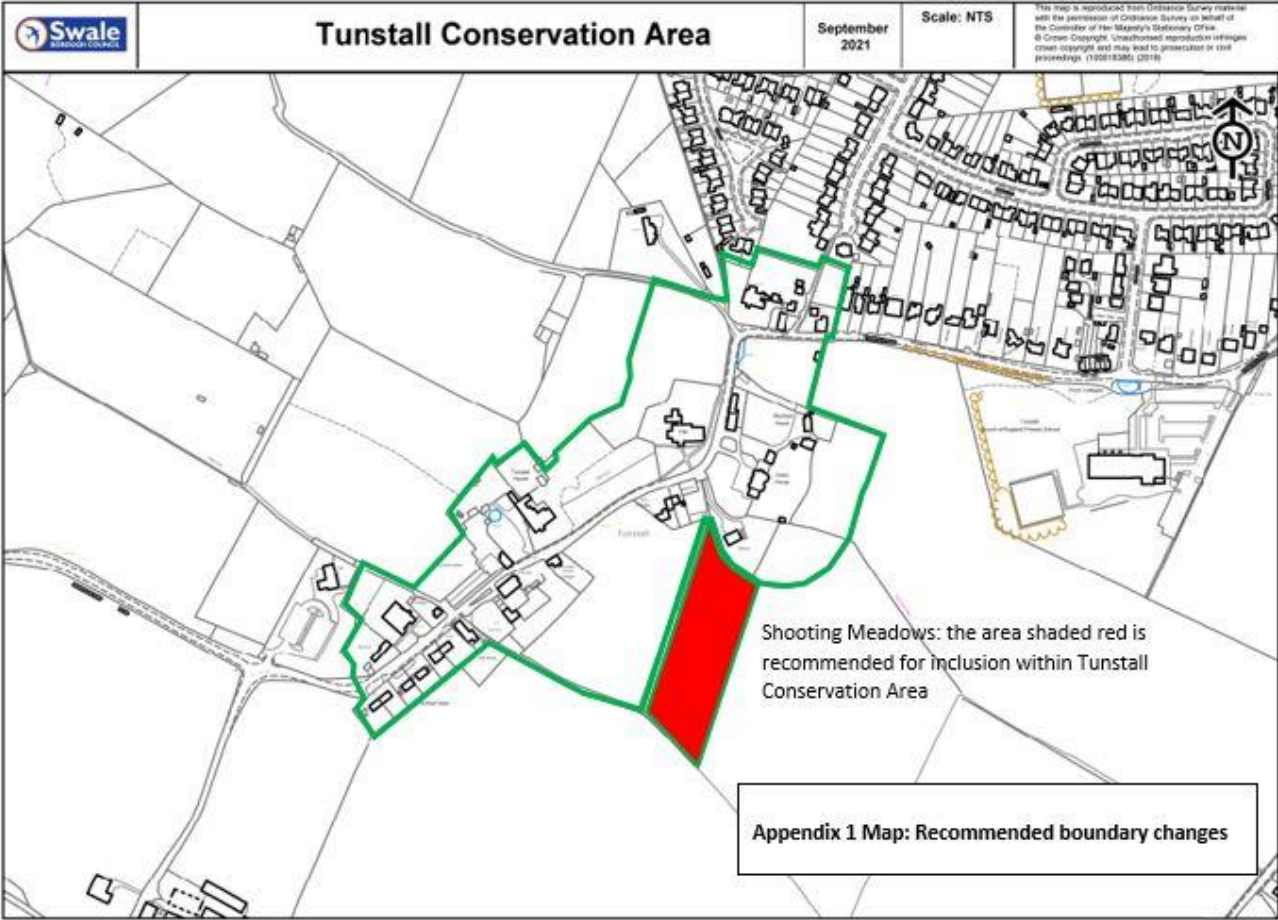


5(a) Tunstall Conservation Area: Summary of Heritage Significance (2)

- Frontage boundary walls, railings and fences are a defining feature.
- The strong historic, visual and functional link between the village and its surrounding 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
- The historical connections with the Cromer and Hales families.



5(b) Tunstall Conservation Area: Proposed & Rejected Boundary Changes (1)



5(b) Tunstall Conservation Area: Proposed & Rejected Boundary Changes (2)

Proposed Boundary Change

- The field known as 'Shooting Meadows' is located to the south of the Rectory and Flint Cottages.
- The story that Sir Edward Hales was shot by Cromwell's soldiers and died at Shooting Meadows is not founded on fact. However, the field does have strong historical connections as the venue for obligatory archery practice in Tudor times.
- In 1840 Shooting Meadow is referred to as 'pasture' in the tithe apportionment. At that time it was owned by the 'Trustees of Edward Hales viz Edward Darrell' and tenanted by George Baker.
- In the 20th century what was historically one field was split into two, the southern part being used as the playing field for Tunstall Primary School. As such it has communal value for the recent generations of children who used it for exercise and sporting activities.
- Given this level of historical and communal value, and its close visual and physical proximity to the centre of the village, its inclusion within the conservation area is justified.

5(b) Tunstall Conservation Area: Proposed & Rejected Boundary Changes (3)

Rejected Boundary Change

- Consideration was given to extending Tunstall Conservation Area to include the Grove Farm complex which lies some 300m south-west of the existing conservation area. The historic farm complex includes a significant historic farmhouse as well as two barns and a brick-built stable, all dating from the 16th and 17th centuries and all Grade II listed buildings.
- However, after careful consideration it was decided not to recommend their inclusion within the conservation area because:
 - They are physically separated from the conservation area by a field, by a poplar tree belt and by a range of sizeable modern agricultural buildings.
 - There is no intervisibility between the existing conservation area and the historic farm complex at Grove Farm.
 - There are few locations where the conservation area can be seen in the same views as the historic buildings at Grove Farm.
 - The heritage significance of the Grove Farm complex is already highly protected by statutory listing.

5(c) Tunstall 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 street lighting to establish whether existing lighting is appropriate, well positioned and well designed
- 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.
- The replacement of concrete road kerbs with granite as and when the opportunity arises.
- Improvements to the concrete/pebble haunching alongside the flint boundary wall to the parish church..
- A review of Coffin Pond including its potential for improved biodiversity, its visual appearance and its immediate surroundings.

5(c) Tunstall 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 further planting or for felling or thinning.
- Positive management may occasionally involve the removal of trees to preserve, restore or open up significant views.

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 will be documented, considered and referred to in any changes made to the documents as a result. This work is currently underway.
3. If a significant degree of comment is received which then requires substantial change to the appraisal document, then re-consultation may be necessary.
4. Otherwise, final changes to be made to document (reflecting any comments made) as appropriate, and a report to be produced recommending adoption of the document for development management purposes by the Council's Cabinet, which it is anticipated will be able to consider the matter at its final meeting in April.
5. It's anticipated that the appraisal & management plan document will be adopted no later than the end of May 2022.
6. 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?

