

Swale House
East Street
Sittingbourne
Kent
ME10 3HT

14 January 2022

Dear Sir, Madam

DRAFT RODMERSHAM CHURCH CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL RESPONSE TO THE DRAFT APPRAISAL ON BEHALF OF QUINN ESTATES

We write on behalf of our client Quinn Estates in response to the proposed designation of a new Conservation Area at Rodmersham Church and to comment on the Proposed Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Strategy (Public Consultation Draft November 2021).

We understand that the area including Rodmersham Church and areas to each side of Church Street, encompassing all of the buildings in the village core, are being considered for designation.

Comments on the draft Conservation Area Appraisal

The Appraisal identifies the key buildings in the Conservation Area to comprise the Church of St Nicholas, and the collection of grade II buildings to the north of the church, to each side of Church Street. These comprise: Church House, Church House Cottage and Church House Farm (Matsons).

The principal elements of the area which are identified as comprising the main reasons for designation are:

- The medieval grade I listed Church of St Nicholas and its boundary wall and lych gate;
- The collection of grade II listed buildings to the northeast of the church, including Church House, Church House Farm, and Church House Cottage;
- The locally significant buildings Glebe House, Orchard Cottage and 5, Church Street.

The setting of the Conservation Area is discussed and described in the draft Appraisal. We note the following key points are made:

- The Appraisal places emphasis on the relationship between the village group and its wider setting. The “sense of openness and long views” (section 2.3) and “strong” relationship between village and landscape setting (summary of significance on page 19) are described.

- The Appraisal states that “Views across the landscape are particularly important when approaching Rodmersham from the north or south”. It is noted that “Landscape views are frequently punctuated by dispersed and isolated buildings or groups of buildings.”
- The Appraisal indicates that these can be appreciated particularly on the approach from the north, as the viewer looks eastwards (to their left), where long views are afforded across open fields and the isolated farmsteads can be appreciated.

Observations and Response

The Council will already be aware that Montagu Evans are acting on behalf of Quinn Estates, in support of the emerging proposals for Highsted Park which have been submitted to Swale Borough Council. The applications have been validated with application references 21/503906/EIOU which relates to the north site (land north of the London Road) and ref: 21/503914/EIOU which relates to the south site (land south of the London Road). The latter application should be considered in relation to this proposed designation of the Conservation Area.

The proposals for the south site is an application for Outline Planning Permission with all matters reserved for the phased development of up to 578.65 hectares of land comprising: up to 8,000 residential dwellings[...] . The application seeks to deliver residential, commercial and community uses as well as open space, green infrastructure and new vehicular routes. Part of the boundary of the south site is close to the village and the boundary of the proposed Rodmersham Church Conservation Area.

The village and its existing heritage designations were taken into account in the formulation and development of the proposals and through pre-application discussions with Swale Borough Council and Historic England.

The masterplan identifies some areas of land to the south of the village to be developed for residential housing. Care has been taken to ensure the historic core of the village remains intact and well defined and that the new residential areas are located to the south, southeast and northeast with a significant landscaped bund that would be approximately 20m deep, acting as a noise and visual buffer. As set out in the ES assessment submitted with the application, there will be some impacts on the long views afforded across open fields from the edges of the proposed Conservation Area, in particular to the south east. The Church will however remain the focus of the village and the Conservation Area designation.

There is likely to be an increase in traffic movements and noise along Church Street which is the central spine of the proposed Conservation Area, however this is not expected to be significant as the Southern Relief Road is expected to take the majority of the traffic travelling north and south between the London Road and the M2.

Following consultation with Swale Borough Council and Historic England, the proposals are being revised and adapted to protect heritage assets further in order to further safeguard and protect the setting of the church and views to the northwest.

This change will also preserve the appearance and setting of the proposed Conservation Area to the west, helping to preserve the “sense of openness and long views” and “strong” relationship between village and landscape.

CLOSING

We hope the contents of this letter are taken into account in consideration of the designation of Rodmersham Church Conservation Area. We look forward to acknowledgment of receipt.

Should you have any queries on the content of this letter, please contact Kate Falconer Hall or Cicely Barnett of this office:



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Kind Regards

Montagu Evans

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