

# Rodmersham Green Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Strategy

PUBLIC CONSULTATION DRAFT October 2021  
WITH AMENDMENTS FOLLOWING PUBLIC CONSULTATION March 2022





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## FOREWORD

“Historic buildings and places add to the quality of people’s lives and help to create a sense of place that we all identify with.

As a community and as a local authority, we have a responsibility to safeguard our historic assets for future generations and to make sure that they are not compromised by unsympathetic alterations or poor-quality developments. Conservation area designation and subsequent management is one way in which this can be achieved.

Conservation areas are not intended to halt progress or to prevent change. Rather, they give the local community and the Borough Council the means to positively manage change and to protect what is special about the area from being harmed or lost altogether.

Swale Borough is fortunate in having such a rich and varied mix of built and natural heritage. The Borough Council wants to see it used positively as a catalyst to sustainable, sensitive regeneration and development, and to creating places where people want to live, work, and make the most of their leisure time. To that end, we have reviewed the Rodmersham Green Conservation Area and the results of that review are set out in this document, which the Borough Council is now seeking constructive feedback on.

This is one of a series of conservation area reviews which the Borough Council is committed to undertaking, following the adoption of the Swale Heritage Strategy 2020 - 2032.”



Councillor Mike Baldock,  
Cabinet Member for Planning and  
Swale Borough Council Heritage  
Champion

*Mike Baldock*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Rodmersham Green Conservation Area

Rodmersham Green Conservation Area was originally designated by Swale Borough Council on 26 September 1973. It has not been systematically reviewed since its original designation and until now there has been no character appraisal or published management strategy.

### 1.2 The Purpose of Conservation Areas

Conservation Areas were first introduced in the Civic Amenities Act 1967. A conservation area is defined as “an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”<sup>1</sup>.

It is the responsibility of individual local planning authorities to designate and review conservation areas from time to time using local criteria to determine and assess their special qualities and local distinctiveness<sup>2</sup>.

The aim of conservation area designation is to protect historic places and to assist in positively managing change, so that their special character is safeguarded and sustained. Areas may be designated for their architecture, historic layout, use of characteristic or local materials, style, or landscaping.

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<sup>1</sup> Section 69 (1)(a) Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Above all, conservation areas should be cohesive areas in which buildings and spaces create unique environments that are of special architectural or historic interest.

Conservation area designation provides extra protection in the following ways:

- Local planning authorities have control over most demolition of buildings.
- Local planning authorities have extra control over householder development.
- Special provision is made to protect trees in conservation areas.
- When assessing planning applications, the local planning authority must pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area and its setting.
- Policies in the Local Development Plan positively encourage development which preserves or enhances the character or appearance of conservation areas.

<sup>2</sup> Section 69 (2) Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

### 1.3 The Purpose and status of this Character Appraisal and Management Strategy

The purpose of this Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Strategy is:

- To identify the significance of the heritage asset – i.e. the value that the conservation area has to this and future generations because of its heritage interest – which may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic interest.
- To increase public awareness and involvement in the preservation and enhancement of the area.
- To provide a framework for making planning decisions, to guide positive change and regeneration.
- To review the conservation area boundary 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 area which offer potential for enhancement or improvement through positive management.

A Conservation Area Character Appraisal is an assessment and a record of the special architectural or historic interest which gives rise to the character and appearance of a place. The appraisal is a factual and objective analysis, which seeks to identify the distinctiveness of a place by defining the attributes that contribute to its special character. It should be noted, however, that the appraisal cannot be all-inclusive, and that the omission of any particular building, feature or space should not be taken to imply that it is not of interest. In some cases, significance may only be fully identified at such time as a





feature, a building or site is subject to the rigorous assessment that an individual planning application necessitates.

A fundamental part of this review of Rodmersham Green Conservation Area is to assess whether the area still possesses the special architectural and historic interest which merits its continued designation. It also provides an opportunity to review the effectiveness of the designation over the last 48 years and whether the extent of the area should be either extended or reduced.

The appraisal includes a management strategy to help the Borough Council and other stakeholders positively manage the conservation area. A management strategy may include action points, design guidance and site-specific guidance where appropriate: It can identify potential threats to the character of the area and can, where appropriate, identify the potential for Article 4 Directions or local heritage listing.

An appraisal serves as a basis for the formulation and evaluation of Development Plan policies, as a material consideration in the making of development management decisions by the local planning authority and by the Planning Inspectorate in determining planning appeals. It can also heighten awareness of the special character of the place to help inform local Parish Councils in the formulation of Neighbourhood Plans, Village Design Statements and individual's in design choices.

This Conservation Area Character Appraisal has been compiled in consultation with local organisations, elected representatives and council officials. It is to be the subject of public consultation and is prepared with a view to being formally adopted for development management purposes.

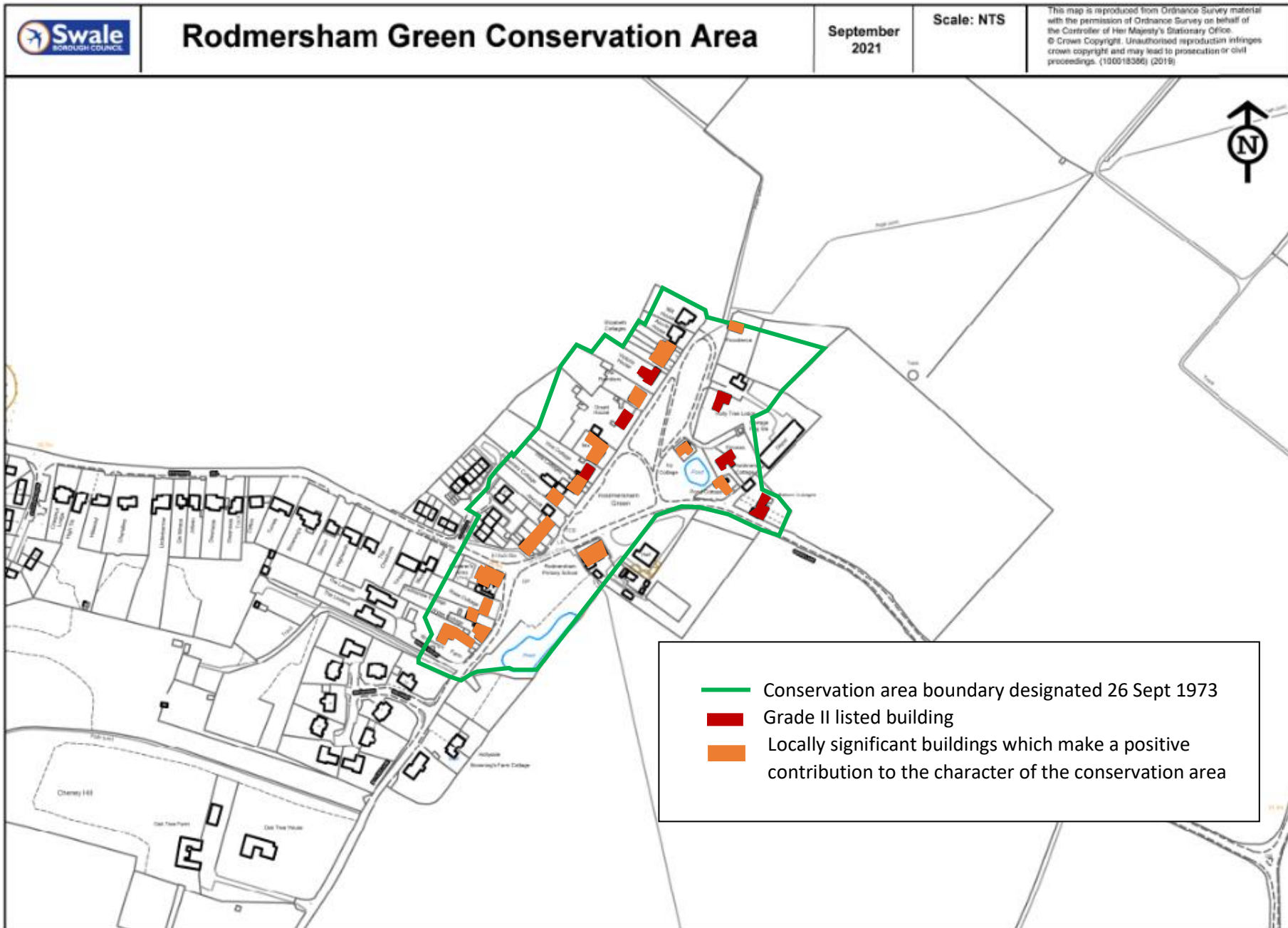
The map on page 7 shows the current extent of the conservation area as it was designated on 26 September 1973. It also shows listed

buildings which appeared on the National Heritage List in September 2021 and other buildings which have been assessed as having local heritage interest.

The author would like to thank all those who contributed the production of this character appraisal.



Early 20<sup>th</sup> century photograph of the Fruiterers Arms



# Rodmersham Green Conservation Area

September 2021

Scale: NTS

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## 2.0 CHARACTER APPRAISAL

### 2.1 The History of Rodmersham Green

Rodmersham Green is part of the civil parish of Rodmersham. The name is derived from Anglo Saxon 'Hrothmaer's Ham' meaning Hrothmaer's settlement or village. Perhaps surprisingly, there is no mention of Rodmersham in the Domesday survey of 1086.

In medieval times the settlement fell under the Manor of Milton and consisted primarily of dispersed farmhouses and cottages. The parish church, located some 1km to the east of the green, dates from the 13<sup>th</sup> century and is dedicated to St. Nicholas. The only surviving medieval houses on the green today are Holly Tree Lodge, Pardoners Cottage and Baker Cottage. If other houses existed at that time they would have been of poor construction or they have been replaced or rebuilt during later centuries.

A handful of houses and cottages were built around the green during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries at which time owners would have benefited from commoners' rights to graze cattle on the green, courtesy of the Lord of the Manor.

In 1798 Edward Hasted described the Parish as: "The land in the lower or northern part of this parish is rich and fertile for corn, and is let at a high rent, but higher up among the hills it becomes chalky and light, and much of it very poor. It is not an unpleasant situation, and considering its nearness to a very unwholesome country, is not so unhealthy as might be expected."<sup>3</sup>



Early 20<sup>th</sup> century photograph of the former windmill

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<sup>3</sup> Edward Hasted. *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent* (1798).



A tower windmill was built to the north of the green in 1835, grinding corn from local arable farming to produce flour. The windmill was a local landmark seen for miles around from all points of the compass but it fell into disuse during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. ~~It suffered a disastrous fire in 1969 after which it was demolished and the site was redeveloped with two detached houses.~~

Terraced housing for farm workers and their families, was added to the north-west side of the green during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Today, Rodmersham Green comprises a vibrant small community served by a public house, a primary school, a shop and a village hall.





## 2.2 Topography, Geology, Landscape and Setting

Rodmersham Green lies 3 kilometres (2 miles) south of Sittingbourne town centre, on the northern edge of the North Downs dip slope and to the east of Highsted Valley. It has always been a small, distinctly separate settlement, in a characterful countryside setting. The topography is characterised by undulating chalk downland and dry valleys supporting productive farmland on loamy soils.



Aerial view showing the extent of fruit orchards in 1960

For a large part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Rodmersham Green was surrounded by fruit orchards but by the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century many of the orchards had been grubbed out and turned over to arable farming. The local landscape is identified in the Swale Local Landscape Designation as the Rodmersham Mixed Farmlands<sup>4</sup> and described as “a rural landscape, much opened up for intensive arable farmland, although locally valued elements are present including a sense of openness and long views”.

The green itself has a strong identity and sense of place. Its extent is well defined, mainly by buildings, but also by trees, particularly along its southern edge. Trees make a significant contribution to the special character of the area.



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<sup>4</sup> in the Swale Local Landscape Designation LUC October 2018 and the Swale Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal, Jacobs 2011

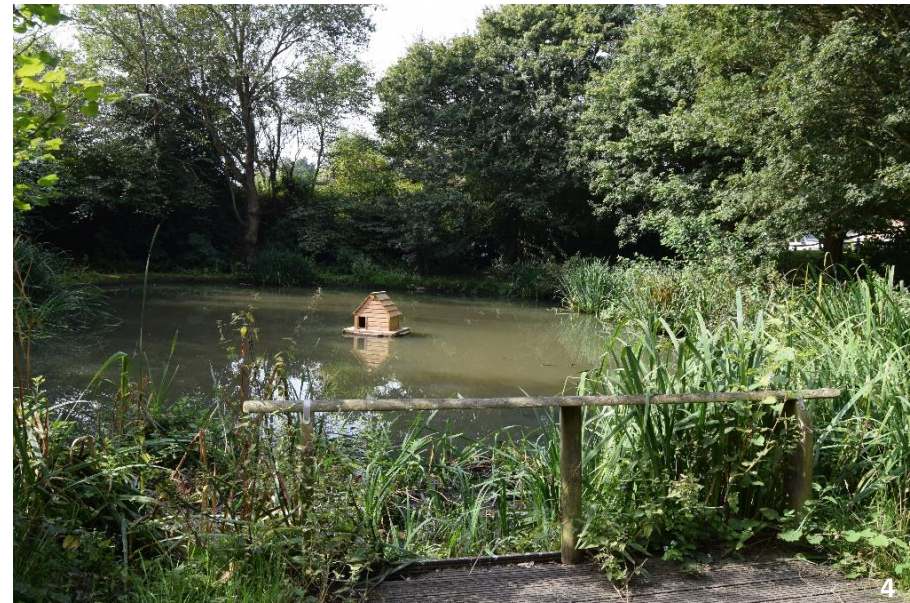


Grassy verges are a defining feature of the roads on the green (plate 2). Where concrete kerbs have been introduced (such as outside the school) they have a harsh and uncharacteristic urbanizing effect.

The entrances to the village from Bottles Lane (plate 3) and Green Lane are well defined by trees, vegetation and roadside banks which provide a pleasing counterpoint to the openness of the green itself.



Two ponds collect water from the fields and the roads and form part of the natural water course which eventually passes Rodmersham Court through Bapchild and into Tonge millpond. As well as being picturesque and a valuable local amenity, the ponds are host a variety of flora and fauna so they make an important contribution to local biodiversity. The duck house is a recent installation by the Parish Council to encourage wildlife (plate 4).



The aerial photograph on page 12 illustrates the strong relationship which exists between Rodmersham Green and its surrounding landscape.







## 2.3 Buildings

It is the green itself that is the defining feature of the village of Rodmersham Green but it is the buildings that give definition to the green.

The earliest houses are of medieval date and include Holly Tree Lodge (5), Pardoners Cottage (6) and Baker Cottage (7). They are located close to each other on the south-east side of the green or, in the case of Baker Cottage, on Green Lane. The oldest and most significant of the early buildings is Holly Tree Lodge, a classic Wealden hall house dating from the 15<sup>th</sup> century. It is regrettable that today it is largely hidden from public view behind an overly tall hedge.



All three early buildings are of timber-framed construction and all have characteristic steeply-pitched Kent peg tile roofs with prominent chimney stacks. Holly Tree Lodge and Baker Cottage have had their jetties under built in brickwork whereas at Pardoners Cottage the timber frame is concealed behind painted render.



Other significant houses facing the south-east side of the green include Ivy Cottage (8), a restrained yellow stock brick house with an unexpected semi-octagonal north-west elevation, and the former Providence Chapel, built in 1848, now converted to a house (9).



The north-west side of the green is more tightly knit, with an interesting mix of buildings which provide a richness in their variety



of dates, styles and building materials. Vine Cottage (10) is the earliest, the statutory list suggesting an early 18<sup>th</sup> century date, although there may be earlier fabric concealed within.



The Georgian period also saw the construction of Rosemary Cottage (11), Vine Cottages (12), Orsett House (1832) (13) and Victoria House (dated 1752 but said to include earlier work) (14). Interestingly, the five houses which were built within roughly 130 years of each other are all of different materials and in distinctly different architectural styles. The elegant wrought iron railings at Orsett House are particularly noteworthy (1).



The Victorian and Edwardian periods saw further additions to the north-west side of the green. St Patrick's Row (circa 1860) (15) is a terrace of former farm workers' cottages constructed in yellow stock brickwork: It has always housed the village shop, but in different locations. Elizabeth Cottages (16) date from 1904 and a detached house at The Ramblers (17) is of similar date. The spearhead railings at The Ramblers are another good example of their kind (see p17).







1970s detached houses at the northern end of the green are a little more universal in their style and materials so contribute little to the special character of the place.

Jaycroft and Ilex (18 and 19) are two 21<sup>st</sup> century rebuilds in distinctly modern styles. Some would say that they are a little over-scaled but their use of traditional forms and building materials were clearly intended to reference their traditional surroundings.



The Fruiterers Arms, circa 1835, (21) occupies a strategic location at the junction of Bottles Lane and Green Lane but its tarmac forecourt and prominent bottle banks provide scope for improvement. Rose Cottage (20), Wyles Cottage and Brownings Farm all provide a pleasant frontage to the west side of Bottles Lane.



It is Rodmersham Primary School, built circa 1869 and later, (22) which provides the visual focus to the south of the Green. Constructed in yellow stock brick with red brick dressings under a steep Kent peg tile roof, it is a good example of a Victorian village school. The village Hall to its south is modern and rather ordinary; it is set behind trees and a car park so it features little in views from the green.





universally fashionable during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Brick was used extensively for new buildings and to over-clad old buildings to give them a more fashionable appearance. Kent peg tiles were the preferred choice for roofing in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries but they gave way to slate during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, particularly once the railway came to Sittingbourne in 1848. Modern concrete roof tiles and uPVC windows are less sympathetic materials introduced during the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**Timber frame:** Oak framing was commonly used in building construction during the medieval period when local woodlands offered an ample supply of good and durable building materials. Several historic buildings in Rodmersham Green are constructed of timber framing and others have had their frames concealed behind later facades or cladding. The timber-framed tradition continued in softwood framing well into the Georgian period and even later in farm and utility buildings.

## 2.4 Building Materials

The distinct character of Rodmersham Green owes much to the variety of architectural styles, materials and details displayed in its buildings. Building materials were used to express architectural aspirations as well as changing fashions. Until the transport revolution of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, virtually all building materials were locally sourced and manufactured. Consequently they are often a true expression of the locality and its natural resources. Even materials that were in common use at the time make a valuable contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

The earlier domestic buildings of Rodmersham Green were of timber-framed construction and are important survivals because of their age and type. As oak for building became harder to source, brick became



**Brick:** Brick earth was in plentiful supply in North Kent so, not surprisingly, brickwork is a familiar building material in Rodmersham Green. There is a wide variety in the size, bond, colour and character of the bricks, depending on their age, style or function.

Earlier examples are irregular clamp-fired red bricks used during the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In the centuries that followed, the shape, size and coursing of brickwork became more regularised and uniform. Yellow stock brickwork was commonly used from the Regency period onwards and the combination of yellow and red brick achieved the polychromatic effect that was associated with the High Victorian era and the Arts and Crafts Movement. There is an interesting example of burr brickwork (over-fired bricks which fused together in the kiln) in the wall attached to Orsett House.



Rodmersham Primary School



Victoria House



Elizabeth Cottages

**Kent peg tiles:** The name 'peg tile' refers to a plain clay tile suspended from the top edge of a tiling lath. Traditionally peg tiles were held in place by a small wooden peg or latterly an aluminium 'drop', wedged into, or passed through one of the two holes in the head of the tile. Simple firing methods and local clays produced strong, durable and light peg tiles in warm orange/red terracotta colours. Imperfections in the raw clay and the hand manufacturing process resulted in a richness and variety in colour and shape. They

are renowned for their warm and varied colours and rich texture which cannot be replicated in modern machine-made tiles.

Until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, hand-made clay peg tiles were the preferred roof covering for buildings throughout Kent. Tiles continued to be handmade from local clays well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century and there are still a handful of manufacturers today. They are a characteristic roofing material of the south-east of England and dominate the roofscapes of many towns, villages and small settlements including Rodmersham Green. Kent peg tile roofs are visually prominent because of the steep pitch of the roofs on which they are laid (typically steeper than 35 degrees).



**Slate:** Slate roofs rarely appear before the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, they became very widely used in the area after rail transport made it more easily accessible. Slate was imported, mainly from Wales, and gave rise to shallower roof pitches of between 30 and 35 degrees. Slate appears on a handful of buildings in Rodmersham Green.

**Weatherboarding:** Painted feather-edged weatherboarding is a traditional walling material in the south-east of England. There are several examples on the green.

**Modern building materials:** In recent decades mass produced concrete roof tiles and uPVC windows have been used within Rodmersham Green but they do not generally sit comfortably within the context of the historic village.



## 2.5 Boundary fences, railings and walls

Boundary treatments are an important aspect of the character of Rodmersham Green. Railings, picket fences, walls and hedges all help to define spaces in a pleasing way. Modern close-boarded fences are less sympathetic and less pleasing to the eye.



Vine Cottages



The Ramblers



Orsett House



Orsett House

## 2.6 Archaeology

The Kent Heritage Environment Record (HER) notes little of archaeological significance at Rodmersham Green, most likely due to the lack of investigation. Most of its entries relate to prehistoric flints dating from the Palaeolithic age.

There are earthworks in Highsted Wood to the west of the village and findings during nearby quarrying show rich Iron Age and Roman remains as well as Bronze Age and Neolithic.

## 2.7 The Public Highway

The winding geometry and the inclination of the highway as it approaches Rodmersham Green adds to the experience and the sense of arrival.

For as long as there has been a green it has been bisected not only by Green Lane but by a network of roads, tracks and footpaths. They are a defining feature of the village. The pleasant informality of the unmade track along the south-east boundary contrasts with the more formal tarmac surfaces of the other roads. Fortunately any temptation to add concrete kerbs to the green itself has been resisted in favour of simple timber posts which appear to serve their purpose well.

Soft margins, grassy verges and tree/hedge-lined banks are a defining feature of the highway. Where concrete kerb lines have been introduced in the recent past on Green Lane and Bottles Lane they generally detract from the rural character of the place.

Highway signs are typically utilitarian and uncoordinated.

Frequently used public footpaths radiate from the green to the north and the south across farmland.



### 3.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Rodmersham Green is a place with a strong and distinctive identity based on the manorial history of the green and the buildings which surround it. The variety of building styles, spanning the last seven centuries, and their relationship to green and to the surrounding countryside are a defining feature of the village.

Local building materials are strongly in evidence, including timber framing, yellow and red brickwork, Kent peg tiles, slate and feather-edged weatherboarding. Fences, railings, hedgerows and trees also make a distinct contribution to the special character of the place.

The mix of buildings and spaces, intersected by footpaths and roads, continue to make Rodmersham Green an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve.

The conservation area has served its purpose well over the 48 years since it was first designated. The key characteristics that gave rise to its designation in 1973 appear to have been well managed by local owners, the Parish Council and the Local Planning Authority. That is not to say that there have not been changes because there have, but they have typically been made with respect to the distinct character of the place and have integrated well into their historic context.

There is no doubt that Rodmersham Green should continue to be designated as a conservation area.

There are some areas where the line of the boundary has become less relevant over time or where circumstances dictate that the boundary should be changed. Proposed changes are detailed in appendix 1 below.

#### Summary of significance

The significance and special interest of Rodmersham Green Conservation Area can be summarised as follows:

- A small settlement which originated as a farming community in the medieval period.
- The manorial history which gave rise to the green which provided grazing rights for the commoners.
- The architectural contribution made by several listed buildings as well as some notable non-designated buildings.
- The eclectic mix of traditional building styles, forms and building materials.
- Boundary walls, railings and fences are a defining feature.
- 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.



## Summary of Key Characteristics

### Key Positive Characteristics:

- The strong sense of visual identity provided by the green.
- The historical significance of the green and its manorial connection.
- The mix of building styles exhibiting buildings from seven centuries. Key historic buildings such as the village school, the Fruiterers Arms, Holly Tree Lodge and Orsett House play an important role in defining the character of the village.
- The use of vernacular building materials: in particular timber-framing, brickwork, weather boarding, Kent peg tile and slate.
- The character of Green Lane, its soft verges and highway banks.
- The contribution made by mature trees, hedgerows and planting.
- The strong relationship between the village and the surrounding landscape, experienced through views and vistas and through the public footpath network.
- Despite its close proximity to suburban Sittingbourne, it retains a strong and independent sense of identity and place.

### Key Negative Characteristics:

- The occasional use of non-indigenous building materials such as uPVC windows or concrete roof tiles.
- Overhead cables and utility poles.
- Concrete highway kerbs and signs which detract from the rural character of the village.

## 4.0 CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Conservation Area designation is not an end in itself. It is a way of recognising the special architectural or historic character of an area so that appropriate steps can be taken to preserve or enhance it.

Conservation is not about preventing change; Rodmersham Green Conservation Area is part of a living community and change is needed to sustain and meet its future needs. It is about positively managing change so that what the community cherishes today can be properly looked after and passed on to future generations in good condition.

This management strategy is intended to encourage active involvement in the future management of Rodmersham Green Conservation Area. It provides the opportunity for the Borough Council, the Parish Council, local amenity groups, Kent Highways, Kent County Council, individual householders and local businesses to take part in positively managing the area.

### 4.1 Statutes and policies

When a conservation area is designated there are statutes, planning policies and regulations which govern which types of development require planning permission and the way that the local planning authority undertakes plan making and decision taking. The statutes and policies that directly affect designated conservation areas are outlined in appendix 4 below.

It is those statutes and policies which provide the framework for managing change in conservation areas. Most significantly, the local

planning authority is required to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area in the exercise of all its planning functions.

The Swale Borough Local Plan aims to ensure that the significance of Rodmersham Green Conservation Area is sustained and enhanced through:

- Preserving or enhancing the area's special character or appearance.
- Preserving or enhancing the setting of the conservation area and of other designated heritage assets.
- Safeguarding and better revealing the significance of any archaeology.
- Protection and enhancement of landmarks, views and vistas within and without the conservation area.
- Safeguarding non-designated heritage assets which make a positive contribution to the significance of the area.
- Safeguarding significant spaces.
- Safeguarding significant trees.
- Promoting high quality design in new development which responds positively to context and the distinct character of the conservation area.
- Continued sensitive management of the public realm.
- Requiring new development to respond positively to the Conservation Area Character Appraisal,

### 4.2 Published guidance

There is a wealth of published guidance on positively managing change in conservation areas. Historic England has published a



range of guidance and advice notes which are listed in the bibliography at appendix 5 below. Swale Borough Council has adopted supplementary planning documents which are listed in appendix 3 below.

### 4.3 Householder alterations

Where householder alterations are proposed which require planning permission the Council will typically seek to ensure that those alterations enhance the special character and appearance of the conservation area.

Opportunities to reinstate missing architectural features (such as sash windows, panelled doors or original roof coverings) and traditional boundary treatments will be encouraged by the Council and may be requested in relation to planning applications for extensions and/or alterations, where appropriate.

The Conservation Area Character Appraisal has identified some householder alterations which have involved the removal of historic features such as period windows, doors, roof coverings and chimney stacks.

Even in conservation areas, some householder alterations to unlisted buildings can be undertaken without the need for planning permission. The cumulative impact of ill-considered alterations to traditional properties can have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of a conservation area. Such alterations have, and could continue to erode the character of Rodmersham Green Conservation Area over time.

In light of the above, Swale Borough Council may consider the use of an Article 4 Direction in order to bring some householder

alterations (which are currently classed as permitted development) under planning control, to ensure that all alterations are positively managed through the planning system.

Householder alterations which could be brought under control by an Article 4 Direction at Rodmersham Green include the following:

- Replacement windows and doors.
- Changes to roof coverings.
- Removal of chimney stacks.
- The installation of solar and photovoltaic panels on the front wall or roof slope.
- Alterations to fences, railings and boundary walls.
- Adding a front porch.
- Installing rooflights in the front roof slope.
- Replacing a front garden with a hard surface.

### 4.4 Swale local heritage list

Arising from Swale's adopted Heritage Strategy 2020-2032, the Borough Council is compiling a Local Heritage List in order to identify heritage assets which are not formally designated.

The Local Heritage List:

- raises awareness of an area's local heritage assets and their importance to local distinctiveness;
- informs developers, owners, council officers and members about buildings within the local authority boundary that are desirable to retain and protect;
- provides guidance and specialist advice to owners to help protect the character and setting of those buildings, structures, sites and landscapes;

- helps the council in its decision making when discussing proposals and determining planning applications; and
- records the nature of the local historic environment more accurately.

The impact of any development on a building or site included within the Local Heritage List will be a material consideration when the council considers an application for planning permission.

Several unlisted buildings in Rodmersham Green Conservation Area would be eligible for inclusion within the Swale Local Heritage List.

## 4.5 Public realm

The public realm (that is those areas which fall between the buildings and are enjoyed by the public) makes a significant positive contribution to the special character of Rodmersham Green Conservation Area. The green, the highway, public footpaths, signage and the ponds, all fall within the public realm and provide opportunities for enhancement.

In rural conservation areas, it is especially necessary to guard against standard highway 'improvements' which do not necessarily respect the special character of the place. The injudicious use of concrete kerbs and off-the-shelf road signs in Rodmersham Green has detracted from its special character and rural charm.

The retention of soft verges (without concrete kerbs) and roadside banks is fundamental to the future sensitive management of the highway.



Restrained use of highway signing and road markings is also critically important. Where signs, road markings, street furniture, salt bins or rubbish bins are necessary they should be located and designed carefully.

Future highway maintenance, improvements and alterations will be carried out in accordance with *Streets for All*, Historic England (2018) and *Highway Works and Heritage Assets: the Kent Protocol for Highway Works in Relation to Designated Heritage Assets*, KCC and KCOG (2011). Both provide advice on good practice for highway and public realm works in historic places. Early consultation with all stakeholders (including Swale Borough Council's Conservation and Design Team and Rodmersham Parish Council) will be fundamental to achieving appropriate standards in future changes.

In the past it is clear that there has been pressure to park on the green, or for vehicles to turn on or pass over the green. This clearly needs to be positively managed in order to prevent damage and to resist visual harm caused by parking. The existing timber stumps and raised grass verges appear to work well but may well need to be extended in future in order to prevent increasing pressure from more determined drivers.

Rodmersham Green has more than its fair share of overhead cables and poles. Despite some very recent rationalisation to the number of cables they are still visually intrusive. Where possible, opportunities should be taken to investigate removal of redundant overhead cables, reducing the number of poles and undergrounding of services.

The ponds provide valuable amenity as well as biodiversity and ecology. Future management is likely to involve a light touch but may require removal of leaf litter (during the winter to avoid hibernation times) and tree canopy reduction to improve photosynthesis of pond plants.



The Parish Council, Swale Borough Council and Kent County Council will seek to ensure that the public realm continues to be sensitively managed.

Opportunities for enhancement in the public realm:

- 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.



## 4.6 Trees and planting

Trees and hedgerows play a vital role in the special character of Rodmersham Green.

The retention and active management of trees and hedgerows should be encouraged. Opportunities for new planting should be considered. Planting which contributes to the form and structure of the local environment in and around Rodmersham Green should normally be comprised of native species, although other species now assimilated into the Kentish rural scene may also be appropriate.

Six weeks' notice must be given to the Borough Council in writing before any works are undertaken to trees within conservation areas.

Where hedges have been removed on Bottles Lane consideration should be given to replanting in order to conceal the close boarded fence (3).



Opportunities for enhancing landscape and ecology:

- An audit of trees, hedgerows, green spaces and orchards may be undertaken to establish whether there is any scope for better management or for further 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.

## 4.7 New development opportunities

Potential for new development within the Rodmersham Green Conservation Area is extremely limited. If proposals for development come forward they will be considered against local and national planning policies which attach great weight to the conservation of designated heritage assets and their settings.

Development within the setting of the conservation area may affect its heritage significance. The local planning authority is required to pay special attention to preserving the setting of the conservation area (or any listed buildings) in any plan making or decision taking.

## 4.8 Heritage at risk

There are no designated heritage assets within Rodmersham Green on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register or on the Swale Borough Council's Heritage at Risk Register. Neither has this appraisal identified any heritage assets which are currently at risk.

However, if any of the identified locally significant features or buildings become at risk in the future, these may be added to the Heritage at Risk Registers if their significance is threatened by their condition or lack of appropriate use.

In such cases the Council will notify respective owners and, where appropriate, work with them and other stakeholders to investigate opportunities for removing the risk and securing the asset's future.



St Patrick's Row 1930s



## APPENDIX 1

### Proposed amendments to Rodmersham Green Conservation Area boundary

As part of the review of Rodmersham Green Conservation Area, consideration has been given to whether the current boundaries accurately reflect the area which has special architectural or historic interest.

In large part, the area covered by the current boundaries is considered to be appropriate in that it still possesses special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. However, there are two alterations proposed, as follows:

#### **Boundary adjustment 1 (please refer to map on page 27)**

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. As none of the bungalows are of architectural or historic significance, 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.

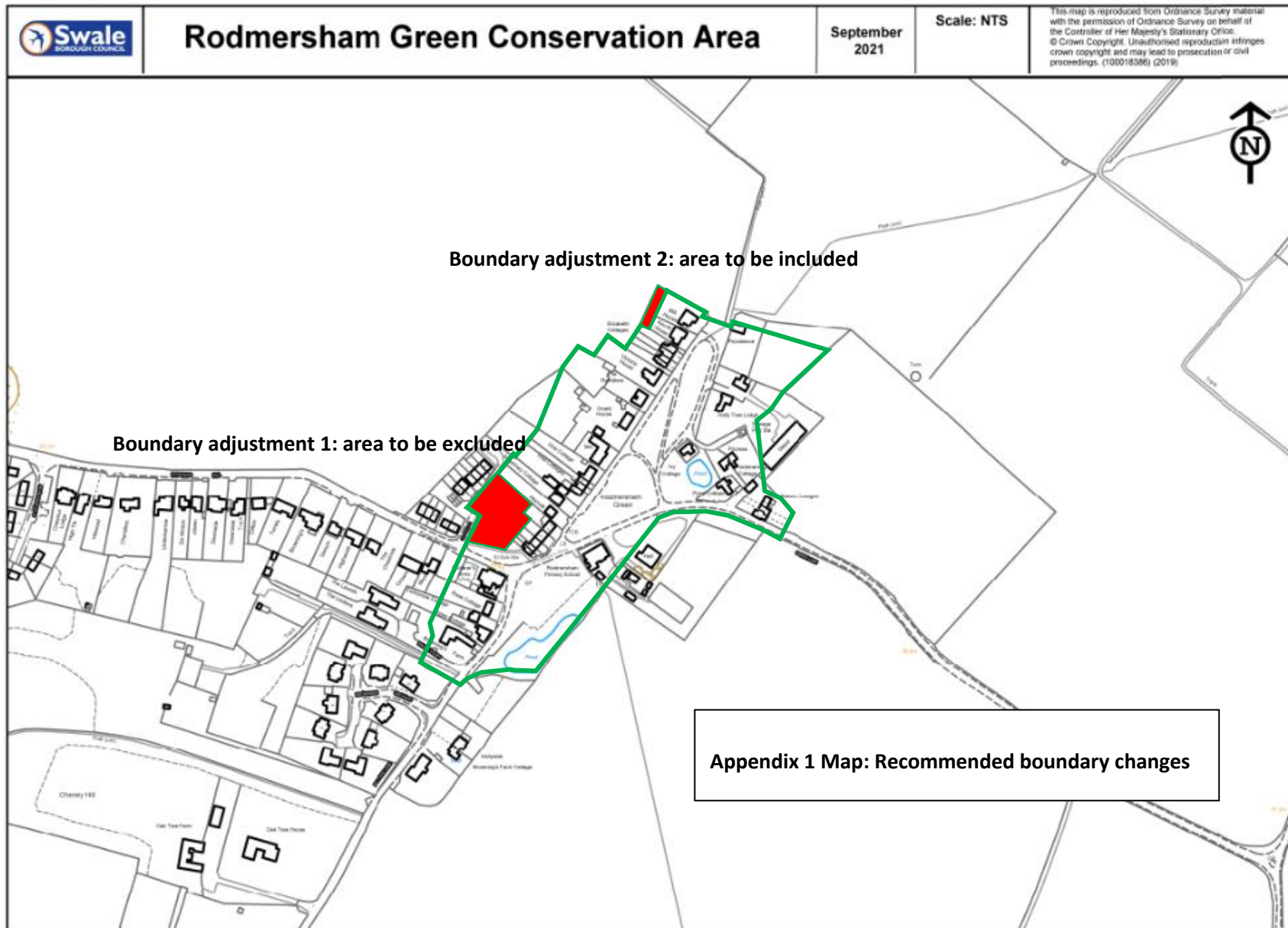
#### **Boundary adjustment 2 (please refer to the map on page 27)**

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.

#### **Other areas**

Consideration has been 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. On balance it was decided that, despite the fact that The Barn is of some architectural and historic interest, the extension to the conservation area could not be justified.

Consideration was also 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. The character of the hamlet is also distinct and very different from that of Rodmersham Green. Consequently it is recommended that Rodmersham be the subject of a separate conservation assessment and appraisal to determine whether it should be designated as a conservation area in its own right.





## APPENDIX 2

### Map regression



Saxton's map of Kent 1575



Captain William Mudge's map of Kent of c.1800



Andrews topographical map of the county of Kent 1769

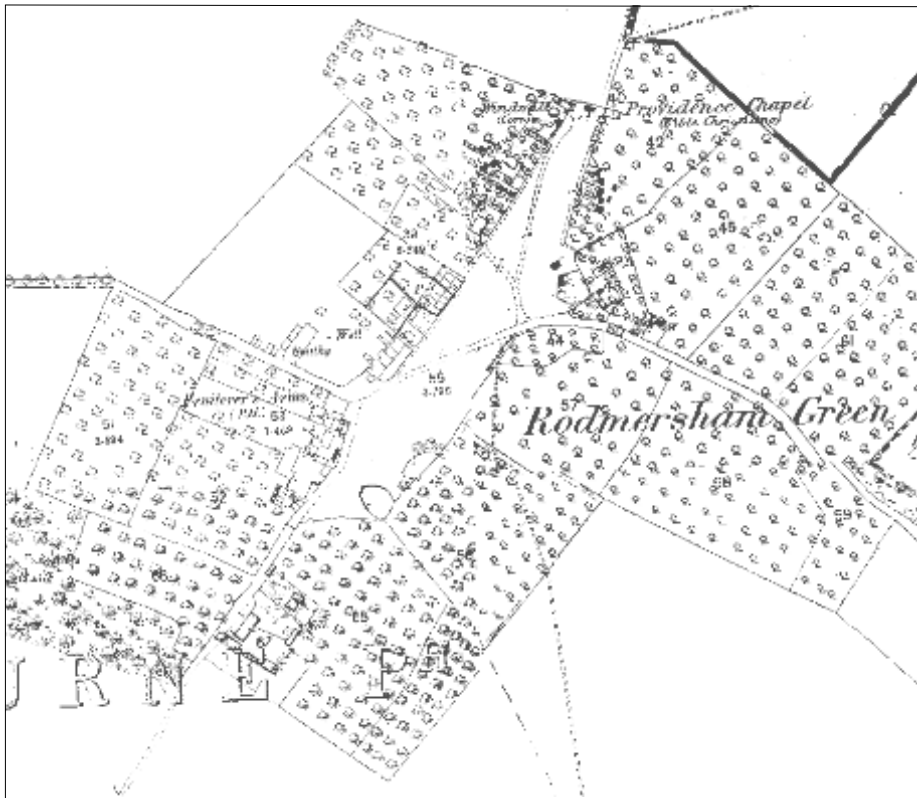


Ordnance Survey First Series 1816

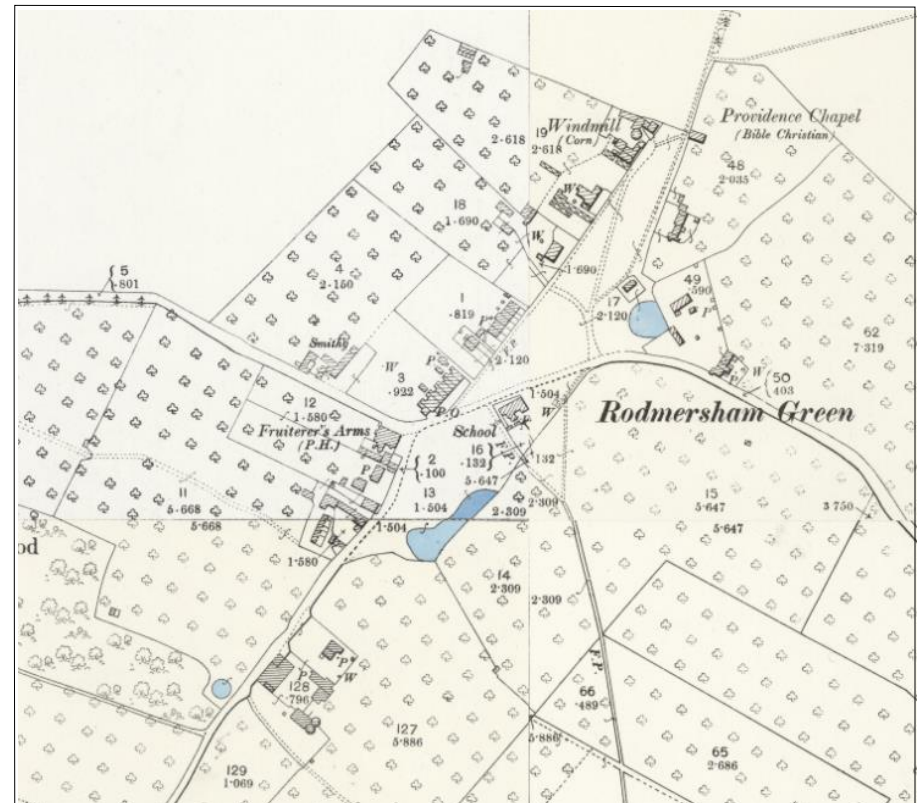
Tithe map 1838 (Kent Archives)







1871 Ordnance Survey map



1896 Ordnance Survey map

## APPENDIX 3

### Extracts from the National Heritage List for England (the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest)

The statutory list for Rodmersham Green is compiled by the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and is altered and amended from time to time as buildings are added or removed from the list. The list descriptions below are taken from the statutory list and were current in September 2021. For more detailed and up to date information please refer to the National Heritage List for England at [www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list](http://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list).

Features and structures which are not specifically mentioned in the statutory list are not necessarily excluded from statutory protection which extends to the listed building as well as to any object or structure fixed to the building and to any object or structure within the curtilage of the building which predates July 1948.

The omission of a building from this list should not necessarily be taken to indicate that it is not listed without first referring to the National Heritage List.

#### **VINE COTTAGES, RODMERSHAM GREEN. Grade II**

House, sometime cottage pair. C18. Timber framed and exposed with plaster infill on red brick ground floor. Plain tiled roof. Two storeys and hipped roof with gabled dormer and stack to right. Four wood casements on first floor and 3 on ground floor, with glazed door in glazed sloping porch to left.

#### **ORSETT HOUSE, RODMERSHAM GREEN. Grade II**

House. Circa 1830. Yellow stock brick and slate roof. Two storeys and hipped roof with 2 stacks at end right and 1 at end left. Regular fenestration of 3 glazing bar sashes on first floor and 2 on ground floor all with gauged heads. Central door of 6 raised and fielded panels with semi-circular fanlight in Doric porch.

#### **VICTORIA HOUSE, RODMERSHAM GREEN. Grade II**

House. C18, dated 1752, and extended early C19. Chequered red and grey brick with plain tiled roof. Originally 2 cell lobby entry, with later bay to right. Two storeys and brick cornice to hipped roof with stacks to end left and end right. Regular fenestration of 2 wood casements with central window space and glazing bar sash added to right on first floor, and 2 segment headed wood casements with central door of 6 raised and fielded panels and flat hood, with segment headed glazing bar



sash added to right. Wood and glass conservatory to left. Plaque in window space over door reads: M. 1752. I. E.

**HOLLY TREE LODGE, RODMERSHAM GREEN.** Grade II

Wealden hall house now house. C15. Timber framed and exposed with plaster infill and underbuilt in red brick, with plain tiled roof. Four framed bays. Two storeys, originally jettied to left and to right, now underbuilt. Recessed hall bays with flying wall plate on arched braces. Hipped roof with gablets and stacks to centre left and projecting end right and end left. Four wood casements to each floor and boarded door to left.

**PARDONERS COTTAGE, RODMERSHAM GREEN.** Grade II

House, now cottage pair. C15. Timber framed and plastered with plain tiled roof. Two bay lobby entry plan. One storey and attic in hipped roof with gablets, 1 gabled dormer and central stack. Two wood casements on ground floor and 2 central boarded doors. Catslide outshot to right in yellow stock bricks.

**BAKER COTTAGES, RODMERSHAM GREEN.** Grade II

House, sometime cottage row. C16. Timber framed and exposed close studded with brick nogging and plaster infill and part underbuilt with red brick. Plain tiled roof. Five framed bay range and projecting wing. Two storeys and hipped roof with gablets, and projecting wing right with wavy bracing and return hip. Roof steps up at centre point to right. Stacks to centre, and projecting end left and end right. Five wood casements on first floor and 4 on ground floor, with boarded doors to centre in hipped porch with side lights, and to right in projecting wing.



Pardoners Cottage, Pond Cottage and Baker Cottage

## APPENDIX 4

### Legislation, national policy and local policy

#### Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Section 66 General duty as respects listed buildings in exercise of planning functions:

(1) In considering whether to grant planning permission or permission in principle for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Section 69 Designation of conservation areas:

(1) Every local planning authority— (a) shall from time to time determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and (b) shall designate those areas as conservation areas.

(2) It shall be the duty of a local planning authority from time to time to review the past exercise of functions under this section and to determine whether any parts or any further parts of their area should be designated as conservation areas; and, if they so determine, they shall designate those parts accordingly.

(3) The Secretary of State may from time to time determine that any part of a local planning authority's area which is not for the time being designated as a conservation area is an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance; and, if he so determines, he may designate that part as a conservation area.

(4) The designation of any area as a conservation area shall be a local land charge.

Section 71 Formulation and publication of proposals for preservation and enhancement of conservation areas.

(1) It shall be the duty of a local planning authority from time to time to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas.

(2) Proposals under this section shall be submitted for consideration to a public meeting in the area to which they relate.

(3) The local planning authority shall have regard to any views concerning the proposals expressed by persons attending the meeting.

Section 72 General duty as respects conservation areas in exercise of planning functions:

(1) In the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, of any functions under or by virtue of] any of the provisions mentioned in subsection

(2), special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.



### **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

The NPPF sets out the government's planning policies and how they should be applied. It provides the national framework for conserving and enhancing the historic environment, including conservation areas.

### **National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)**

The NPPG sets out government's guidance on how the act and national planning policy should be applied.

### **Adopted Local Plan- Bearing Fruits 2031: The Swale Borough Local Plan (2017)**

Relevant objectives and policies within the local plan include:

Policy ST 1 Delivering sustainable development in Swale.  
To deliver sustainable development in Swale, all development proposals will, as appropriate:..... 8. Achieve good design through reflecting the best of an area's defining characteristics; 9. Promote healthy communities through:..... maintaining the individual character, integrity, identities and settings of settlements; 12. Conserve and enhance the historic environment by applying national and local planning policy through the identification, assessment and integration of development with the importance, form and character of heritage assets (including historic landscape

Policy CP 4 Requiring good design.  
All development proposals will be of a high quality design that is appropriate to its surroundings. Development proposals will, as appropriate:... 2. Enrich the qualities of the existing environment by promoting and reinforcing local distinctiveness and strengthening

sense of place; 5. Retain and enhance features which contribute to local character and distinctiveness;..... 8. Be appropriate to the context in respect of materials, scale, height and massing; 9. Make best use of texture, colour, pattern, and durability of materials; 10. Use densities determined by the context and the defining characteristics of the area; 11. Ensure the long-term maintenance and management of buildings, spaces, features and social infrastructure;.....

Policy DM 32 Development involving listed buildings.  
Development proposals, including any change of use, affecting a listed building, and/ or its setting, will be permitted provided that:  
1. The building's special architectural or historic interest, and its setting and any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses, are preserved, paying special attention to the: a. design, including scale, materials, situation and detailing; b. appropriateness of the proposed use of the building; and c. desirability of removing unsightly or negative features or restoring or reinstating historic features.  
2. The total or part demolition of a listed building is wholly exceptional, and will only be permitted provided convincing evidence has been submitted showing that: a. All reasonable efforts have been made to sustain existing uses or viable new uses and have failed; b. Preservation in charitable or community ownership is not possible or suitable; and c. The cost of maintaining and repairing the building outweighs its importance and the value derived from its continued use.  
3. If as a last resort, the Borough Council is prepared to consider the grant of a listed building consent for demolition, it may, in appropriate circumstances, consider whether the building could be re-erected elsewhere to an appropriate location. When re-location is not possible and demolition is permitted, arrangements will be required to allow access to the building prior to demolition to make a record of it and to allow for the salvaging of materials and features.

Policy DM 33 Development affecting a conservation area.

Development (including changes of use and the demolition of unlisted buildings or other structures) within, affecting the setting of, or views into and out of a conservation area, will preserve or enhance all features that contribute positively to the area's special character or appearance. The Borough Council expects development proposals to:

1. Respond positively to its conservation area appraisals where these have been prepared;
2. Retain the layout, form of streets, spaces, means of enclosure and buildings, and pay special attention to the use of detail and materials, surfaces, landform, vegetation and land use;
3. Remove features that detract from the character of the area and reinstate those that would enhance it; and
4. Retain unlisted buildings or other structures that make, or could make, a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the area.

Policy DM 34 Scheduled Monuments and archaeological sites

1. Development will not be permitted which would adversely affect a Scheduled Monument, and/or its setting, as shown on the Proposals Map, or subsequently designated, or any other monument or archaeological site demonstrated as being of equivalent significance to scheduled monuments. Development that may affect the significance of a non-designated heritage asset of less than national significance will require a balanced judgement having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.
2. Whether they are currently known, or discovered during the Plan period, there will be a preference to preserve important archaeological sites in-situ and to protect their settings. Development that does not achieve acceptable mitigation of adverse archaeological effects will not be permitted.
3. Where development is permitted and preservation in-situ is not justified, the applicant will be required to ensure that provision will be made for archaeological excavation and recording, in advance of

and/or during development, including the necessary post-excavation study and assessment along with the appropriate deposition of any artefacts in an archaeological archive or museum to be approved by the Borough Council.

### **Swale Borough Council Key Supplementary Planning Guidance**

Swale Borough Council Planning and Development Guidelines No 2: Listed Buildings – A Guide for Owners and Occupiers.

Swale Borough Council No 3: The Conservation of Traditional Farm Buildings.

Swale Borough Council Planning and Development Guidelines No 8: Conservation Areas.

### **Swale Borough Council Heritage Strategy 2020-2032**

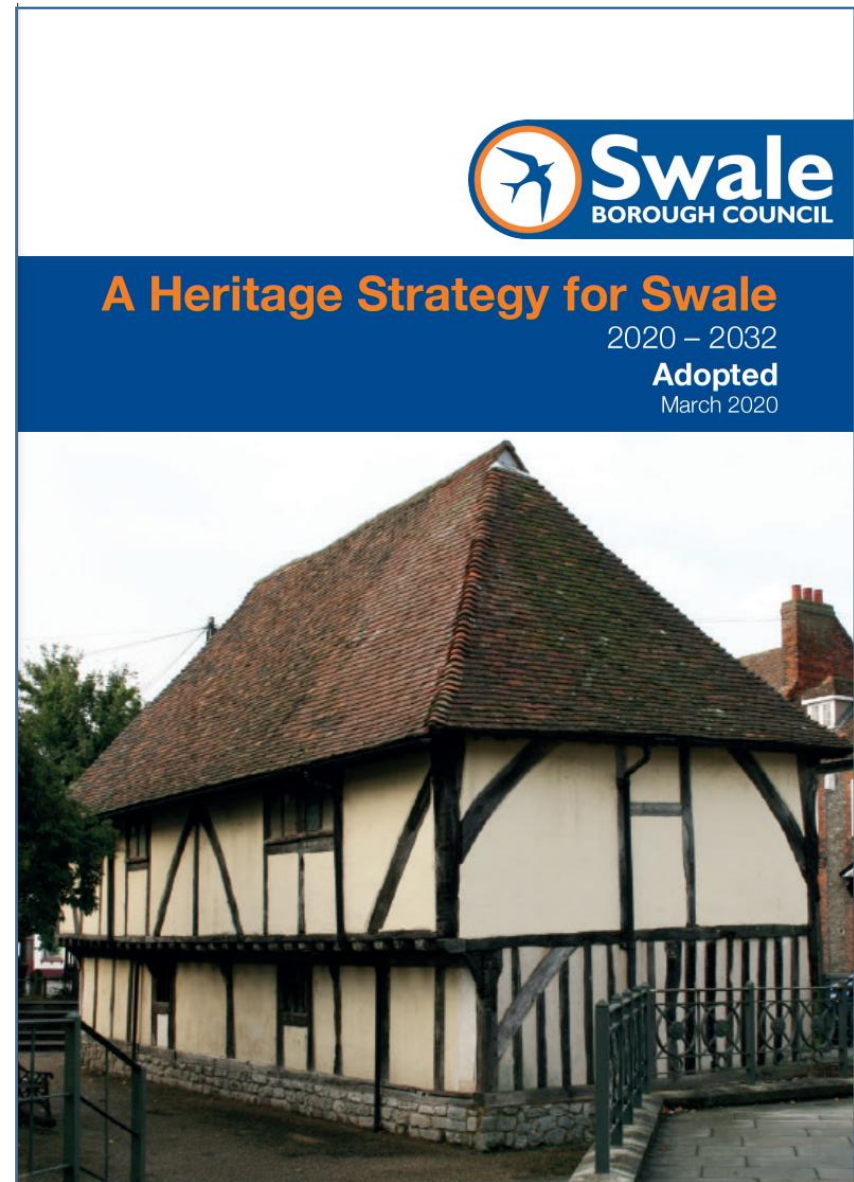
The Council has developed a borough-wide heritage strategy to help it, along with key stakeholders and other interested parties, to protect and manage the historic environment in Swale in a positive and sustainable way, on a suitably informed basis.

A key element of the strategy is setting out the Council's overall vision and priorities, which it is hoped will align with the vision and priorities of local communities and local amenity societies as far as possible, in order that the strategy can be widely supported.

The strategy sets out a series of proposals in the associated initial 3-year action plan which are aimed at enabling the positive and sustainable management of different elements of the borough's historic environment for the foreseeable future. Priority is given to those parts of the borough's historic environment which are already suffering from, and at risk from negative change, and/or which face significant development pressure, threatening their special



character. The proposed set of actions will involve joint project working with amenity societies and/or volunteers from the community wherever this is possible.



## APPENDIX 5

### Bibliography

Edward Hasted *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent* (1798).

R. Muir *The New Reading the Landscape. Fieldwork in Landscape History* (2000)

John Newman *The Buildings of England North East and East Kent* (2013)

Kent County Council *South east Archaeological Research Framework* [www.kent.gov.uk](http://www.kent.gov.uk)

Kent County Council *Historic Environment Record* [www.kent.gov.uk](http://www.kent.gov.uk)

Kent County Council *Exploring Kent's Past* [www.kent.gov.uk](http://www.kent.gov.uk)

Kent County Council and Kent Conservation Officers Group, *Highway Works and Heritage Assets: the Kent Protocol for Highway Works in Relation to Designated Heritage Assets* (2011)

LUC Swale *Local Landscape Designation* (October 2018)

Jacobs Swale *Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal* (2011)

*Rodmersham 2000, The Storey of a Village* (2000)

### Historic England Guidance, Advice and Publications

Historic England Good Practice Advice Notes (GPAs) provide advice on good practice and how national policy and guidance should be applied.

GPA1: *The Historic Environment in Local Plan Making* (March 2015)

GPA2 - *Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment* (March 2015)

GPA3 – *The Setting of Heritage Assets* (December 2017)

Historic England Advice Notes (HEANs) include detailed, practical advice on how to implement national planning policy and guidance.

HEAN 1: *Conservation Areas: Designation, Appraisal and Management* (Feb 2019)

HEAN 2: *Making Changes to Heritage Assets* (February 2016)

HEAN 9: *The Adaptive Reuse of Traditional Farm Buildings* (October 2017)

HEAN 10: *Listed Buildings and Curtilage* (February 2018)

HEAN 12: *Statements of Heritage Significance* (October 2019)

HEAN 16: *Listed Building Consent* (June 2021)

*Streets For All* (May 2018)



## APPENDIX 6

### Assessment of significant views

Views make a valuable contribution to the way in which the character or appearance of a place is experienced, enjoyed and appreciated. Identifying significant views allows the contribution they make to be protected and enables the effective management of development in and around those views. Significant views are annotated on the aerial photograph on page 12 and described below:

**View 1:** Panoramic outward-looking views across the landscape provide a strong connection between the village and its historic farmland setting. They provide visual links to reference points such as Rodmersham Church tower and Rodmersham Court as well as further afield. The contrast between the enclosure experienced within the Green and the openness of the landscape views adds to the experience. As such they are of high heritage significance.



**View 2:** All views along and across the Green are of high significance. They epitomise the history and the unique spatial character of Rodmersham Green where settlement grew up along the perimeter but not on the Green itself.







**View 3:** Views on entering the conservation area by road or by footpath provide an interesting ‘gateway experience’. The contrast between the tree or building-lined approaches and then the sudden openness of the Green provides contrast and drama to the experience.

**View 4:** Views created between buildings, such as the view towards Pardoners Cottage, Pond Cottage and Baker Cottage, illustrated on page 32, have picturesque as well as heritage value. Glimpsed views of buildings through vegetation or across one of the ponds can also have delightful effect.



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[www.Swale.gov.uk](http://www.Swale.gov.uk)



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