

| Local Development Framework Panel | | Agenda Item: 6 |
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| Meeting Date | 18 June 2015 | |
| Report Title | Draft Faversham Town Heritage, Landscape Setting and Characterisation Study May 2015 | |
| Cabinet Member | Cllr. Lewin | |
| SMT Lead | Pete Raine | |
| Head of Service | James Freeman | |
| Lead Officer | Gill Harris | |
| Key Decision | Yes | |
| Classification | Open | |
| Forward Plan | Reference number: | |
| Recommendations | 1. That the Panel note the study and agree to its publication as post submission evidence to the Local Plan. | |

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 To support both Local Plan and Development Management decisions, work has been undertaken to reinforce strategic level evidence relating to heritage. This is taking the form of two pieces of work:
- a. establishing a baseline of heritage assets in the Borough to reinforce the decisions taken in respect of the submitted Swale Borough Local Plan (to be forwarded to the Local Plan Inspector later in June); and
 - b. to determine the extent to which Faversham Town derives its character and historic form from its setting and surrounding landscape.
- 1.2 This report considers the second area of evidence. Drawing upon landscape and heritage evidence the consultants have defined a landscape and heritage setting for the town to inform future more detailed work and decision making (see Appendix 1 for consultant's report).
- 1.3 The study found that the landscape areas that form the immediate setting of the Faversham town "heritage asset" to be richly diverse. The contribution of these

areas is described as positive overall, although this varies between 'high' and 'moderate'.

- 1.4 The study considers the role of the A2 in the morphology of the Town and supports the notion that the line of the road and the distinctive historical relationship of Faversham with its route is a key feature (although not the only one). The study does however acknowledge variances in this picture.
- 1.5 The Panel is asked to note the evidence and to agree its publication as part of the evidence base for the submitted Swale Borough Local Plan.

2 Background

- 2.1 The heritage and landscape significance of Faversham have been important issues affecting planning policy and development management for many years. For example, they have influenced the emerging Local Plan in terms of levels of new housing and the choice of sites. Although a 2006 conservation area appraisal for Faversham (and others nearby areas) attempted to define the landscape and heritage significance of land around the Town, there has been no strategic level analysis of this in terms of whether the Town itself and its surroundings were one large and single heritage asset with a setting.
- 2.2 One aspect of planning policy toward Faversham for many years has been the limitation on development to the south of the A2. Originally, this was a response to the vulnerability of land to development between the road and the M2. Since 2006 there has also been the recognition that the Town's past development, almost wholly north of the A2 Watling Street, is unique in Kent and that this in turn forms part of the landscape and heritage value of the Town itself. This position was only articulated in planning policy for the first time in the emerging Local Plan.
- 2.3 Given the development pressures being experienced, both through the local plan and development management processes, an outcome from last year's report by the Planning Advisory Service was that any strategic approach toward the Town needed to be better articulated and evidenced.
- 2.4 Part of this evidence has been the preparation of a Heritage, Landscape Setting and Characterisation Study by Turley Heritage and VIA. Building on the findings of existing studies and new assessment work, its aim has been to determine the extent to which Faversham Town derives its character and historic form from its setting and surrounding landscape. The work is intended to inform and provide a broad framework for the development of more detailed future planning policy and development management decisions within the setting of Faversham Town.

Approach to the study

- 2.5 The study provides a short historic overview of Faversham and its surrounding villages and a 360 degree characterisation study area (Appendix 1 Fig 1). This is defined as having the potential to contribute to the heritage significance of the Town. The heritage assets within this area are described in an amalgamated fashion. Importantly, for the purposes of the study, and in seeking to describe the setting, this amalgamation is treated as a single large and complex “heritage asset” in its own right. The study also recognises that the setting of this one heritage asset itself will include other heritage assets with their own immediate settings.
- 2.6 In tandem with this identification of heritage assets, the study also provides a further layer of detail to help understand their setting by describing the landscape character of the surroundings outside the urban area. It then describes and illustrates the relative contribution of these defined areas and their sub-areas of setting to the significance of the Town. In so doing, it highlights the broad sensitivity of each of these areas and their susceptibility to change.

The findings

- 2.7 The characters of the landscape areas (and sub-areas) that form the immediate setting of the Faversham Town “heritage asset” are found to be richly diverse. Fig. 1 (over) graphically illustrates the relative contribution of the different character areas and sub-areas within these of the “study area” to the significance of the “heritage asset” of Faversham Town; as elements within its setting. This contribution can be viewed as positive overall, although as can be seen, at this relatively high level of resolution, it varies between ‘high’ and ‘moderate’.

Figure 9: Contribution of setting to Heritage Significance

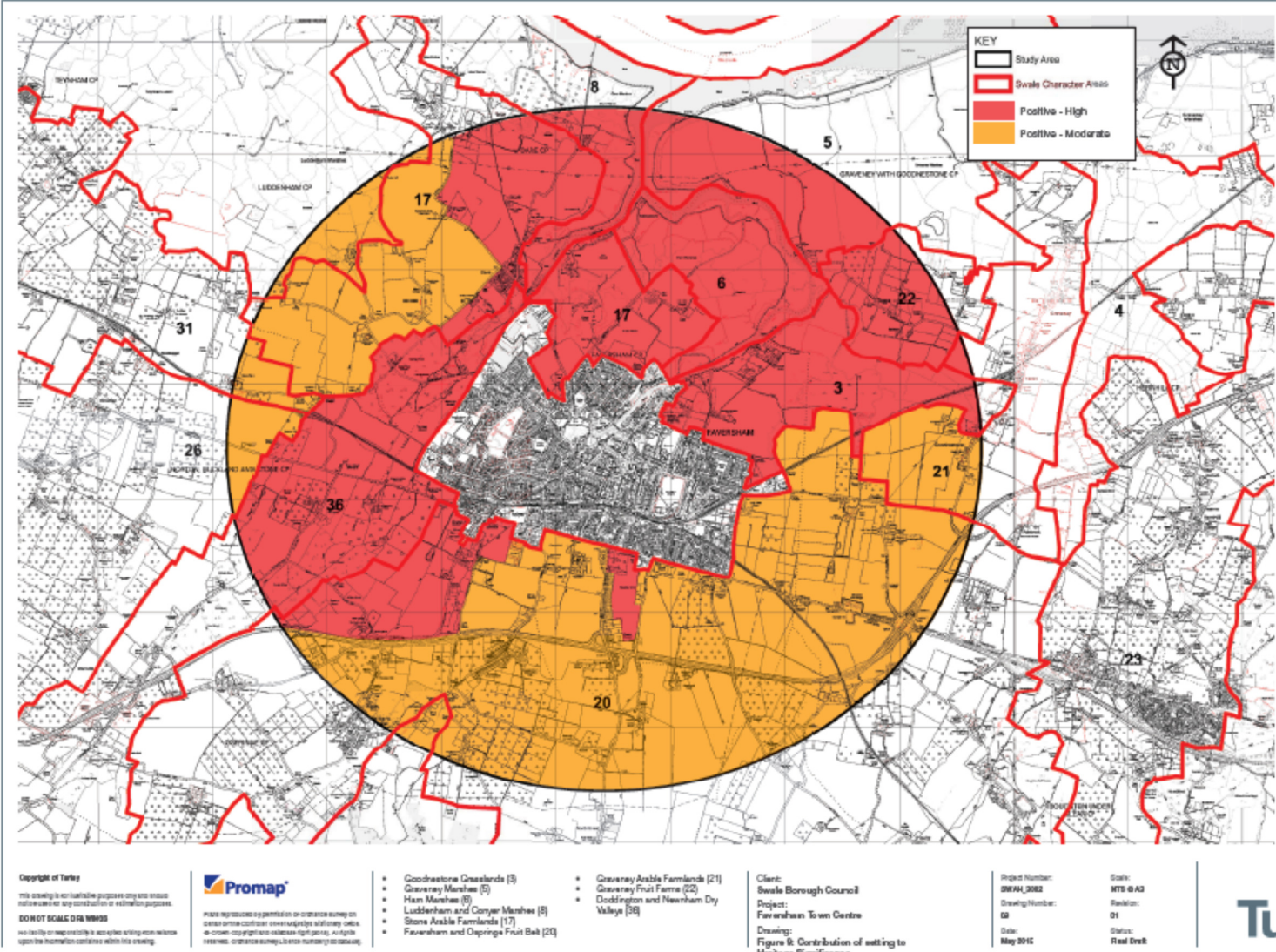


Figure 1 Contribution of setting to heritage significance (Fig 9 of Appendix 1)

- 2.8 A high positive contribution of setting to significance (red) indicates areas of land from where the heritage values of the Faversham Town heritage asset can be most clearly understood and appreciated. These are generally areas of historic landscape and built form that retain largely intact and retain strong visual, functional and historic links with the Town. Areas described as having a moderate positive contribution (orange) are of lesser heritage value relative to the former areas. Here, the legibility of the understanding and appreciation of the significance of the Town has been diminished; as part of the experience of these areas. This could be as a result of the past degrading of the historic character of landscape or townscape and or weaker links visually, functionally or historically with the Town.
- 2.9 The 'A2 question' is addressed by the study. It acknowledges and supports the notion that the line of the ancient London to Canterbury Road and the distinctive historical relationship of Faversham with this route is a key feature, alongside others. It confirms that the contrast of greater built development on the north side and the more open rural-like space to the south predominates and the road still provides in substantial parts a clearly defensible edge to the Town. Overall it is judged that the experience of this feature contributes to the understanding and appreciation of how the Town has developed historically.
- 2.10 The study does however acknowledge variances in the A2 picture. It describes the significance on the south side as generally stronger around the distinct and smaller settlements of Ospringe and Preston. Here, the remaining areas of open and largely undeveloped landscape close to the cores of these other settlements, contribute positively to the significance of the combined heritage asset by enabling an appreciation of their former separateness and rural setting.
- 2.11 Elsewhere, the road is a broad area of transition between suburban and rural characters that has blurred the past distinction of the historic line where town meets country. Although the study still identifies the importance of these areas, their appreciation is lessened where the impact of modern infrastructure, land use and other developments serve to diminish this experience.

Comment

- 2.12 The study's conclusions that change should be managed in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances the significance of this heritage asset is important and the study will be a useful tool in this regard and a pointer for more detailed study. It will also support arguments that inappropriate development within the setting of the Town has the potential to cause harm to its significance, and that efforts should be made to avoid or minimise this.
- 2.13 Faversham has been subject to considerable interest from developers. For the emerging Local Plan, they have advocated increased development levels for the town and additional allocations, whilst planning applications have been made on draft allocations and on non-allocated sites south of the A2. The recent allowing of an appeal for 63 dwellings at Brogdale Road underscores the need and role for

this study, especially as the Council had been unable to evidence and demonstrate the importance of the locality and the harm to it. Whilst the availability of the study was unlikely to have altered the overall outcome of the appeal, it would have provided the evidence to enable the Inspector to appreciate the issue being considered.

- 2.14 The work supports the importance of the role of the A2 in the Town’s morphology, but it is one of a number of attributes contributing to the “specialness” of the Town and its environs. Furthermore, it does not support a presumption against development south of the A2. It is possible that the study’s strategic analysis will be used in support or opposition to specific proposals and it is important that parties do not use it as a crude decision making tool. First and foremost, the study is deliberately a high level analysis that aims to aid understanding of the written description of the surroundings of the Town. For a more detailed understanding of how and to what degree a specific parcel of land within the study area contributes to the significance of one or many of the various heritage assets, further detailed analysis would be required at a finer scale.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 Whilst the study is likely to have variable outcomes in specific case situations, it is important that it is made available to inform decision making as part of the evidence base of the Local Plan. The Panel is therefore recommended to both note the study and agree to its publication as post submission evidence to the Local Plan.

4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 The Panel could agree not to publish the study. Despite any potential disadvantages, the report will be relevant to the Council’s position at the forthcoming Local Plan enquiry and provide the basis upon which to seek more detailed studies for future planning applications.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 A draft of the study was reviewed by Kent County Council (Heritage and Archaeology) and Historic England’.

6 Implications

| Issue | Implications |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Corporate Plan | Supports Priority 1: A Borough To Be Proud Of. |
| Financial, Resource and Property | None identified. |

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| Legal and Statutory | None identified. |
| Crime and Disorder | None identified. |
| Sustainability | The study contributes positively toward an understanding of the environmental strand of sustainable development in so far as it impacts upon spatial and development management decisions around the Town. Whilst there could be potential adverse impacts, these relate to future decision making rather than preparation of the study itself. |
| Health and Wellbeing | Cultural heritage and the natural environment are important components to health and wellbeing. The study contributes positively toward identifying these components. Whilst there could be potential adverse impacts, these relate to future decision making rather than preparation of the study itself. |
| Risk Management and Health and Safety | It is inevitable that aspects of the work will be used by various parties either in support of or against specific proposals. Publication is in the interest of securing a sound Local Plan and a basis upon which to guide Development Management decisions. |
| Equality and Diversity | None identified. |

7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Draft Faversham Town Heritage, Landscape Setting and Characterisation Study May 2015

8 Background Papers

None.