

## Report to Sittingbourne Area Committee - September 2025

### New actions/issues and progress with ongoing actions

No.	Item	Background	Actions/updates
1.	Conservation Area rules	The Milton Regis Society asked if it would be possible to put together a standardised set of rules for shop-keepers and residents within a conservation area. It was agreed to explore providing a “dos and don’ts” list with the Heritage Officer.	<p>Update by Design &amp; Heritage Team of Swale Borough Council.</p> <p><b>Shopfronts in Conservation Areas</b></p> <p>Concerns have been raised regarding planning breaches within Milton Regis High Street. Planning investigations team has been involved.</p> <p>The design of shopfronts, signs and advertisements are material considerations in the determination of planning applications and advertisement consents.</p> <p>The Council has longstanding guidance relating to the design of shopfronts and advertisements within the Design of Shopfronts, Signs and Advertisements Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG). This provides applicants, owners, and developers guidance on achieving high standards in shopfront design and to take a sensitive approach to security, signage and materials.</p> <p>An update to the shopfront design guidance is scheduled for 2026 which will refresh and update the design guidance. This will help ensure that alterations to shopfronts and</p>

			<p>adverts are of the highest quality, whilst supporting the local distinctiveness of our commercial centres.</p> <p>At the same time as this update, we propose a shopfront design leaflet is designed and made available to residents and shop owners to provide guidance to retailers and shop fitters on the main components that contribute to a well-designed shopfront and signpost to the updated guidance document.</p>
<b>2.</b>	Member briefing on SBC powers regarding traveller encampments	Members asked if it would be possible to have a Member briefing on what SBC's powers and duties were relating to traveller encampments.	A briefing will be held for all SBC members in November 2025.
<b>3.</b>	Empty shops on Sittingbourne High Street.	<p>An SBC Councillor raised the issue of empty shops on Sittingbourne High Street.</p> <p>It was agreed that the Chair of the Economy and Property Committee be asked if an update could be provided on what action was being taken to encourage businesses to use the empty shops on Sittingbourne High Street.</p>	Appendix I of this report is a written update on this item.

4.	Box junction, Bell Road, Sittingbourne	<p>Councillor Tim Gibson advised that he had written to KCC Highways to ask what could be done about the sequencing of traffic lights on the Bell Road, Crown Quay Lane junction. The build-up of traffic was causing people to undertake dangerous U-turns and vehicle idling.</p> <p>An SBC Councillor said that drivers were frequently waiting in the yellow box junction on Bell Road, Sittingbourne, and this was contributing to the chaos at that junction.</p>	<p>This matter was discussed at the last Swale Joint Transportation Board Chair's briefing. KCC will provide an update report on the item which will be included on the October JTB agenda. This will be circulated to Sittingbourne Area Committee members as soon as it is available.</p>
5.	Heritage issues	<p><b>Area of Special Control of Advertisements (ASCA)</b></p> <p>Swale Borough Council currently does not have an ASCA. Since the adoption of the Heritage Strategy in 2020 and subsequent Action Plans wherein a number of Conservation Areas have been reviewed, it has been proposed that in order to better manage and maintain Swale's historic environment and heritage, targeted ASCA can prove beneficial for conservation areas with a commercial centre.</p>	<p>The draft consultation document is estimated to be ready by autumn/winter of 2025.</p>

		<p>Any designation needs to be based on public consultation and must follow specific legal steps, including consideration of the order by the Secretary of State.</p> <p>Following an all members briefing in May 2024, it was agreed that a draft consultation document be prepared for approval by the Planning Committee, before undertaking public consultation.</p>	
7.	Swale Local Heritage List	<p>Updates have been given at previous meetings on the Swale Local Heritage List.</p>	<p>The Selection Panel met on 17 October 2024; 278 nominations were presented out of which 150 were shortlisted to be designated as Swale's Local Heritage.</p> <p>The proposed designation list was presented to the Policy &amp; Resources Committee on 27 November 2024, wherein it was unanimously agreed to designate the shortlisted assets with addition of one more asset- taking the total to 151 designated assets on Local Heritage List. The current designated Local Heritage List is now published on the SBC website.</p> <p>At the Selection Panel meeting there were several deferrals. Also, the team have identified a few geographical gaps in terms of current nominations and wish to include</p>

			<p>some recommendations emerging from Conservation Area appraisal work. As such, an additional call for 'invitation to nominate' Local Heritage assets has started from 8 September 2025 for 6 weeks, with the Selection Panel meeting again in the autumn of 2025. Following that, it is anticipated the list would be updated every three years following a call for nominations and Selection Panel. The next one being scheduled for 2028.</p> <p>In addition to the above, a protocol for urgent designation of assets on Local Heritage was adopted at the June 2025 Policy &amp; Resources committee.</p>
<b>8.</b>	Transport issues	<p>Members discussed the difficulties residents were experiencing with bus services in Swale and agreed the following actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Invite the bus companies and a representative from Southeastern Trains to come along to a future Sittingbourne Area Committee meeting.</li> <li>2) Councillors Tony Winckless and Karen Watson to report back to the Sittingbourne Area Committee after Bus Focus Group meetings.</li> </ol>	To be discussed under item 5.