



# Rodmersham Church Street Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Strategy

ADOPTED March 2022



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Front cover: Church Cottage, Church Street

## 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 stop development 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 surveyed and appraised the area around and including Rodmersham’s parish church of St. Nicholas and concluded that it has the special qualities befitting of conservation area status. Following public consultation with useful feedback from local residents and Rodmersham Parish Council which resulted in some appropriate changes being suggested and ultimately made, the Borough Council has chosen to designate this special area as a conservation area, to be known as ‘Rodmersham Church Street Conservation Area.

This assessment of the Rodmersham Church area has directly derived from the work on 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*

## ADOPTION STATEMENT

Following public consultation between November 2021 and January 2022, the Borough Council's Cabinet considered the representations that were made in relation to the (then proposed) Rodmersham Church Street Conservation Area review at its meeting on the 16<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

The officer recommendation that the Rodmersham Church Street Conservation Area should be formally designated as such and that the Character Appraisal and Management Strategy should be adopted for development management purposes was approved at the Borough Council's Cabinet Meeting on the 16<sup>th</sup> March 2022. This document is therefore now formally adopted for use by the Borough Council following the conclusion of the necessary 21-day notification period in the London Gazette and a local newspaper, and to Historic England and the Secretary of State for the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, from the 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2022, or shortly thereafter.



## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to this document

Rodmersham, that is the hamlet on Church Street around St. Nicholas Parish Church, was not previously designated as a conservation area although it contains a number of highly significant listed buildings.

During the recent review of Rodmersham Green Conservation Area, Rodmersham was identified as having the potential to be designated as a conservation area in its own right. Consequently, it has been the subject of detailed assessment and appraisal, and following appropriate public consultation, which provided valuable feedback, it has been designated as a new conservation area in its own right: Rodmersham Church Street Conservation Area.

This appraisal assesses the architecture and history of Rodmersham and concludes that it is an area of special architectural and historic interest and that it meets the criteria for conservation area designation.

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

### 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 duty of the local planning authority “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.”<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. 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.

### 1.3 The purpose and status of this character appraisal and management strategy

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

A fundamental part of the appraisal of Rodmersham is to assess whether it possesses the level of special architectural or historic interest which merits it being designated as a conservation area.

The appraisal includes a management strategy to help the Borough Council, the Parish Council and other stakeholders positively manage the proposed conservation area, in the event of conservation area status being granted. 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,

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

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



where appropriate, identify the potential for Article 4 Directions or local heritage listing.

An appraisal may also serve 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 document has been compiled in consultation with local organisations, elected representatives and council officials. It was subject of public consultation and it was prepared with a view to being formally adopted for development management purposes in the event of the conservation area status being granted, as has subsequently been the case.

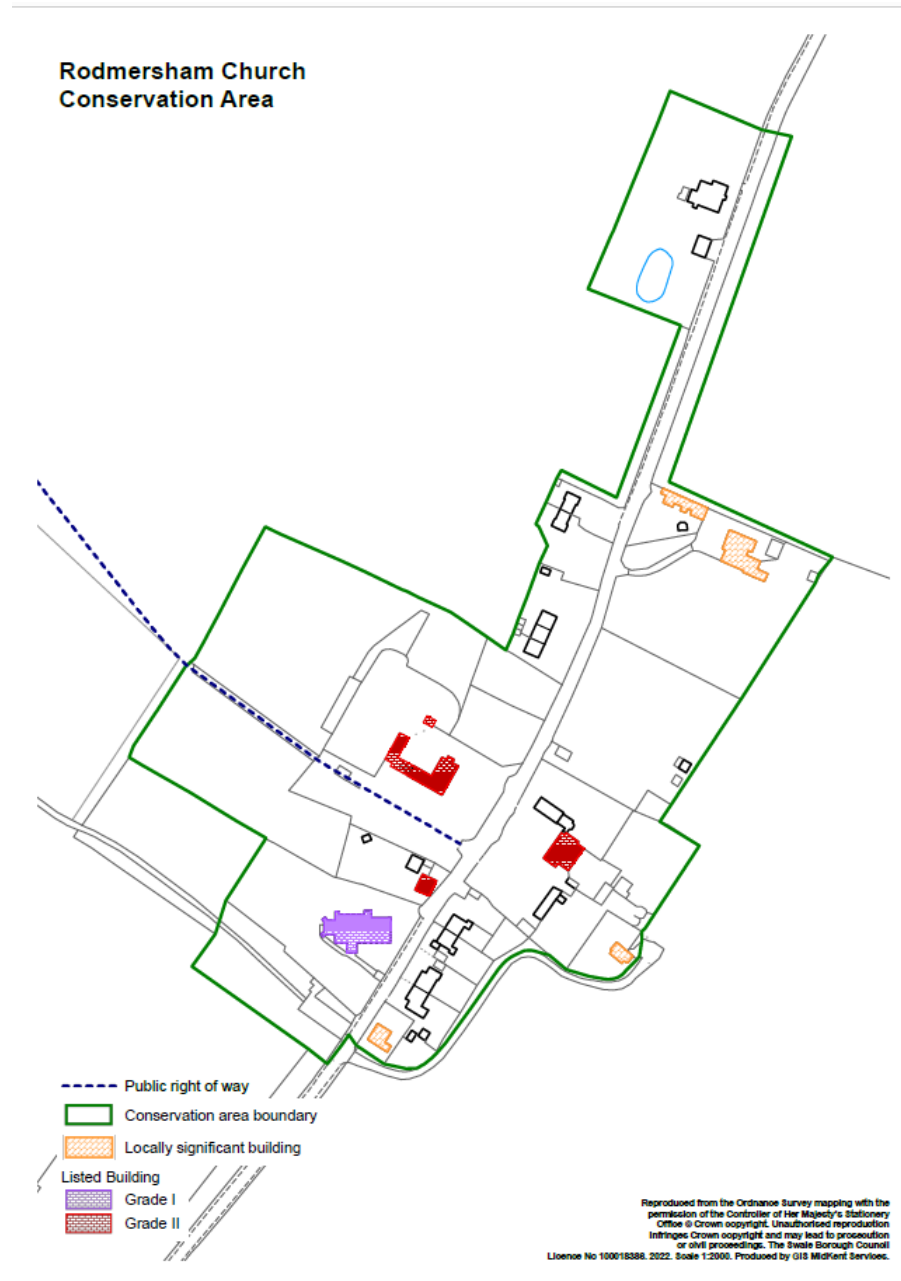
The purpose of this proposed Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Strategy is:

- To identify the heritage significance of the Rodmersham – i.e. the value that the area has to this and future generations because of its heritage interest – which may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic interest.
- To illustrate why Rodmersham possesses the special architectural or historic character which merits designation as a conservation area.
- 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 highlight particular issues and features which detract from the character or appearance of the proposed conservation area which offer potential for enhancement or improvement through positive management.

The map on page 8 shows the extent of the designated Rodmersham Church Street Conservation Area. It also shows listed buildings which appeared on the National Heritage List in October 2021 and other buildings which have been assessed as having local heritage interest.







## 2.0 RODMERSHAM CHURCH STREET CHARACTER APPRAISAL

### 2.1 The history of Rodmersham

The civil parish of Rodmersham is made up of the two small settlements of Rodmersham and Upper Rodmersham, and the larger village of Rodmersham Green.

The name Rodmersham is derived from the Anglo Saxon Hrothmaer's Ham, meaning Hrothmaer's settlement or village – Hrothmaer being a man's name. Given its early origins it is perhaps surprising that there is no mention of Rodmersham in the Domesday survey of 1086.

In medieval times Rodmersham fell under the Manor of Milton and consisted mainly of dispersed farmhouses and cottages. If there was a centre to the parish at that time it would have almost certainly have been around the Parish Church but it is unlikely to have had a sizeable population. The church dates from the 13<sup>th</sup> century and is dedicated to St. Nicholas.

As the local population grew during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries it gravitated towards Rodmersham Green, some 1km to the south-west, where commoners had rights to graze cattle courtesy of the Lord of the Manor. Most of the local community would have been involved in arable and pastoral farming and in fruit and hop growing.

In 1798 Edward Hasted described the Parish of Rodmersham 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>

Limited expansion during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries mainly consisted of tied cottages provided by the farms for farm labourers.

### 2.2 Topography, geology, landscape and setting



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

Rodmersham lies 3 kilometres (2 miles) south-east of Sittingbourne town centre, on the northern edge of the North Downs dip slope and to the east of Highsted Valley. It is a small linear settlement along Church Street which connects the former Watling Street to the north with Dungate to the south. The hamlet is 40m above sea level and the surrounding topography is characterised by undulating chalk downland with dry valleys supporting productive farmland on loamy soils (plate 1).

For a large part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Rodmersham was surrounded by fruit orchards and hop gardens. However, many have been grubbed out and arable farming is now predominant. The aerial photograph at 1A was taken in 2012 and shows the extent of orchards at that time.

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”. Views across the landscape are particularly important when approaching Rodmersham from the north or the south as they provide its distinctive agricultural setting. They also feature in 360-degree views from the church tower.

Rodmersham has always been a small, distinctly separate settlement, in a characterful countryside setting. However, because of the historic land tenure, the landscape is peppered with farmhouses, cottages and farm buildings. Consequently, landscape views are frequently punctuated by dispersed and isolated buildings or groups of buildings.

Rodmersham Court Farm complex is a significant historic group in itself and forms an important part of the setting, to the south of the proposed conservation area.



The aerial photograph on page 10 and 11 illustrate the strong relationship between Rodmersham and its surrounding landscape and indicate where significant views into and out from the conservation area can be enjoyed.

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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







## 2.3 Buildings

Rodmersham is made up of a small number of highly significant listed buildings and a slightly larger number of less significant buildings.

The Parish Church, dedicated to St. Nicholas, is prominently located close to Church Street. (plates 2 and 4). It is possible that there was a pre-conquest church on the site but the current building dates from the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries and was heavily restored by architect S. S. Saltwood between 1875 and 1893 including the addition of the south porch. Constructed predominantly of knapped flint with stone dressings under a Kent peg tile roof, the church is renowned for its handsome west tower which is visible for some considerable distance from all directions. It also has some particularly fine internal fittings. The surrounding graveyard is well maintained and is a place of distinct character and tranquillity.



The timber-framed lych gate (plate 3) and the long knapped flint boundary wall and a row of yew trees (plate 4) contribute to the distinct sense of place and have a strong presence on Church Street. They provide interesting glimpses of the church.







Facing the church on the south–east side of Church Street are two pairs of tied cottages (plate 5) dating from the 1960s. Although late in date, they are relatively restrained and have a neutral impact on the character of the place.

Number 5 Church Cottage has the appearance of an estate cottage (plate 6). It dates from circa 1880 and was originally occupied by the church sexton. Built of local yellow stock brickwork it has a distinctive open gabled porch, a decorative plaque above the porch and a hipped slate roof. The introduction of uPVC windows in place of the original timber sash windows and uPVC cladding to the south elevation are unfortunate, but easily reversed, alterations.



Church Cottage (plate 7) is located immediately north-east of the church, close to the road, behind a flint boundary wall. It dates from the 16<sup>th</sup> century and is noteworthy for its steeply pitched Kent peg tile roof and close-studded timber-framing on its first floor.

To its north, in the centre of the hamlet, two Georgian houses face each other on opposite side of Church Street. Both are well set back and partly hidden behind well-established hedges and trees.



Church Farm House (formerly known as Matsons) (plate 8) is located on the south-east side of the road. Its polite Georgian frontage conceals a much earlier 16<sup>th</sup> century range at the rear. The 2-storey front elevation is constructed of red brick with a handsome central doorcase with pilasters, a fanlight and an open pediment. Its slate roof sits behind a dentilled parapet.

The tithe map and early Ordnance Survey maps at appendix 1 show that this former farm house originally had more extensive farm buildings. Those that survive today include stables, a coach house and the evidence of an oast house with two round kilns, all of significance in their own right. The unexpected geometry of the front brick boundary wall facing Church Street, in part, reflects the footprint of an original barn and the entrance to a former farm track.



Church House (plate 9) on the north-east side of Church Street, is best appreciated from the public footpath that skirts the south eastern edge of its leafy, well-established garden. Its original five-bay Georgian elevation displays attractive chequered red and grey brickwork under a Kent peg tile roof with dormer windows. A gabled early 19<sup>th</sup> century range was added to the south creating an interesting architectural juxtaposition from different periods.





Brick boundary walls extend to the north of Church Farmhouse and Church House on both sides of Church Street as far as open paddocks.



The wall on the north-west side of the road continues as far as two sets of 20<sup>th</sup> century red brick agricultural tied cottages: 1-3 Church Street Cottages (plate 10) date from the 1960s, whereas 4-5 Church Street Cottages (plate 11) date from the 1930s.

Glebe House and Glebe Cottage (plate 12) first appear on the 1896 Ordnance Survey map as 'vicarage'. Glebe Cottage originally served the purpose of coach house and stables before being converted to a house. Both buildings exhibit distinct architectural characteristics of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Arts and Crafts Movement including: steeply pitched clay tile roofs with decorative ridge tiles; a mix of hips, half hips and gables, the gables include decorative close studding or openwork trusses; prominent brick chimney stacks; a weather vane; and red brick banding to yellow brick walls. A brick garden wall extends from Glebe Cottage to the east, enclosing the garden to Glebe House.



Ashgores House (plate 12a) marks the start of the village when approaching from the north. The house does not appear on Ordnance Survey maps until 1938 so it is not as old as it appears at first glance. It has heightened presence because of its elevated position and relative isolation.



## 2.4 Building Materials

The distinct character of Rodmersham 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 were built of timber-framed construction and are important survivals because of their age



and type. As oak for building became harder to source, brick became 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 machine-made bricks, concrete roof tiles and uPVC windows are less characterful materials introduced during the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Flint, sourced from local fields or from chalk quarrying, was the only stone available locally.

**Stone:** Good building stone was not readily available in this part of Kent with the exception of flint which was the only naturally occurring building stone around Rodmersham. Flints appear in seams within the chalk bedrock and were either brought to the surface naturally by farming or uncovered as a by-product of lime quarrying which took place locally. Flints were either laid as field flints or split and knapped with a hammer in order to reveal the dark shiny inner surface in more polite architecture. Flint is used extensively on the Parish Church and in boundary walls (plate 13).

**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. Church Cottage is the only house in Rodmersham that still exhibits oak timber framing externally (plate 14). Other buildings have had their frames concealed behind later facades. The timber-framed tradition continued in softwood framing well into the Georgian period and even later in farm and utility buildings.

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



Earlier examples of brickwork are irregular clamp-fired red bricks used during the 17<sup>th</sup> century. However, in the centuries that followed, the shape, size and coursing of brickwork became more regularised and uniform. Local yellow stock brickwork was fashionable from the Regency period 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 (plate 15). Wood-fired red brickwork often includes smoky grey header bricks (plate 16) which were sometimes used for decorative effect, such as at Church House (plate 9)



**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, many 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 the 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 and villages, including Rodmersham. 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). Kent peg tiles are used as tile hanging as well as roofs in the example at (plate 17).



**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.

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



## 2.5 Boundary fences, railings and walls

Boundary treatments are an important aspect of the character of Rodmersham. Long boundary walls in flint and brick are a defining characteristic of the place, particularly on Church Street where walls follow and define the geometry of the highway. Picket fences, agricultural fences, cleft chestnut fences and wrought iron estate railings also appear in places and also contribute to character.

The wrought iron estate railings facing Church Street between the parish church and Rodmersham Court are a good survival. They could beneficially be used as a pattern for fencing elsewhere in the hamlet as they retain the openness of their surroundings in an elegant and traditional way.

The post box built into the churchyard wall (plate 18) is a pleasing feature.



## 2.6 Trees

Trees play an important role in contributing to the special character of Rodmersham. They create enclosure, provide the backdrop to buildings and define space as one passes through the hamlet, in contrast to the relative openness of the surrounding landscape. Plate 19, taken from the church tower, shows just how important they are in defining the character of the place.

Indigenous species predominate but there are a couple of mature Cedars of Lebanon (plates 12 and 20) which are often associated with historic estates or parklands. Yew trees are found in the churchyard, including a formal row of Yews planted behind the boundary wall on Church Street (plate 2).





## 2.6 Archaeology

The Kent Heritage Environment Record (HER) documents little of archaeological significance in Rodmersham, 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 and findings during nearby quarrying show rich Iron Age and Roman remains as well as Bronze Age and Neolithic.

## 2.7 The Public Highway

As it passes through the hamlet, slight bends in the geometry of Church Street reveal ever changing views and vistas. On approach from both north and south there is a marked contrast between the rural informality of the countryside with its grassy verges, and the slight formality of the village where grassy verges give way to 20<sup>th</sup> century concrete kerbs in places, particularly around the church.

Fortunately, Rodmersham has escaped the ubiquitous highway signs, road markings, speed restriction signs and traffic calming measures seen in other villages, much to its benefit.

Overhead utility cables and poles are, however, an unfortunate visual intrusion in places.



### 3.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Rodmersham is small geographically, but it has a strong and coherent character based on its medieval church and its long farming history. The variety of building styles, spanning several centuries, and their close relationship to Church Street and to the surrounding countryside are a defining feature of the hamlet.

Local building materials are strongly in evidence, including flintwork, timber framing, yellow and red brickwork, Kent peg tiles and slate. Walls, fences, hedgerows and trees also make a distinct contribution to the special character of the place.

The calibre of the buildings and the spaces between them make Rodmersham an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. As such it meets the criteria for conservation area designation.

Some of the buildings are already protected by statutory listing and this has undoubtedly contributed to their conservation in recent decades. Other buildings and spaces have been well managed over time and will no doubt continue as such.

However, there is always potential for unsympathetic development or even small alterations which could have a disproportionate and harmful impact on the special character of Rodmersham or its setting. Conservation area designation provides a positive framework to help manage change sensitively in the future.

#### Summary of significance

The special interest of Rodmersham can be summarised as follows:

- A small settlement which originated as a farming community in the medieval period.
- The ancient Parish Church and graveyard which provides a visual focus to the village and contrasts vividly with the domestic building's roundabout.
- The architectural contribution made by several listed buildings as well as some noteworthy non-designated buildings.
- The eclectic mix of traditional local building styles, forms and building materials.
- The contribution which boundary walls, railings and fences make is a defining feature.
- The strong historic, visual and functional link between the settlement and its surrounding landscape, in particular the views which connect Rodmersham with its surrounding landscape and vice versa.
- The contribution which mature trees make to the character and appearance of the hamlet.

## Summary of Key Characteristics

### Key Positive Characteristics:

- The strong sense of visual identity provided by the Parish Church and by Church Street.
- The mix of building styles exhibited in buildings from several centuries. Key historic buildings such as the Parish Church, Church Cottage, Church House and Church House Farm play a key role in defining the character of Rodmersham.
- The use of vernacular building materials: in particular timber-framing, flintwork, brickwork and Kent peg tiles.
- The character of Church Street, its typically soft green verges and the changing vistas that it provides.
- 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, uPVC cladding or concrete roof tiles.
- Overhead cables and utility poles which are visually intrusive in places.
- Concrete highway kerbs which detract from the rural character of the village but which are fortunately limited in number.



## 4.0 CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The decision to designate a conservation area, is not an end in itself. Designation 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; the Rodmersham Church Street Conservation Area is part of a living community and change is inevitable 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 the proposed Rodmersham Church Street 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 requires 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 3.

It is those statutes and policies which provide the framework for managing change in conservation areas. Most significantly, the local planning authority is legally required to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of any conservation area in the exercise of all its planning functions.

The Swale Borough Local Plan aims to ensure that the significance of conservation areas is sustained and enhanced through:

- Preservation or enhancement of the area's special character or appearance.
- Preservation or enhancement of 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.
- Promotion of 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 development to respond positively to the Borough Council's conservation area character appraisal where these have been adopted.

## 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 4. Swale Borough Council has adopted supplementary planning documents which are listed at appendix 3.

## 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. In particular, 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 Church Conservation Area over time.

In light of the above, Swale Borough Council as local planning authority considers that the use of an Article 4 Direction would be appropriate and justified 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.

Householder alterations which could be brought under control with an Article 4 Direction in Rodmersham include the following:

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

The possible introduction of any Article 4 Direction limiting householder permitted development rights would be subject to a separate public consultation.

## 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 as listed buildings.

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 which is included within the Local Heritage List will be a material consideration when the council considers an application for planning permission.

A small number of unlisted buildings in Rodmersham Church Street Conservation Area could be considered for inclusion within the Swale Local Heritage List including: Ashgores House, 5 Church Cottages, Glebe Cottage, Glebe House, Orchard Cottage, and Outbuildings to south east and south-west of Church Farm House

## 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 Church Street Conservation Area. The churchyard, Church Street and public footpaths, all fall within the public realm and provide limited 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 or unnecessary road signs can have a disproportionate and harmful impact.

The retention of soft verges (without concrete kerbs) is fundamental to the future sensitive management of the highway. The avoidance of non-critical highway signing and road markings is also very important.

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 (Kent County Council) and KCOG (Kent Conservation Officers Group) (2011). Both provide advice on good practice for highway and public realm works in historic places. Early consultation with all stakeholders



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(including Swale Borough Council's Conservation & Design Team and Rodmersham Parish Council) will be fundamental to achieving appropriate standards in future changes.

There is an unfortunate concentration of utility posts, poles and covers adjacent to the church carpark entrance (plate 21). Overhead utility cables and poles have also been identified as being visually obtrusive (plate 22). Where possible, opportunities should be taken to investigate the removal of redundant overhead cables, reducing the number of poles and undergrounding of services.

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

#### Summary of opportunities for enhancement in the public realm:

- An audit of overhead supply lines, utility posts 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 road kerbs and their replacement with grassy verges, hedges, or more appropriate kerbs.

## 4.6 Landscape and ecology

Trees and hedgerows play a vital role in the special character of Rodmersham as well as providing opportunities for enhanced biodiversity and ecosystems.

The retention and active management of trees and hedgerows should be encouraged and opportunities for new planting should be





considered. Planting which contributes to the form and structure of the local environment in and around Rodmersham 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.

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 restore, preserve or open up significant views.

## 4.7 New development opportunities

Potential for new development within the Rodmersham Church Street 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 proposed 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 on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register or on the Swale 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.

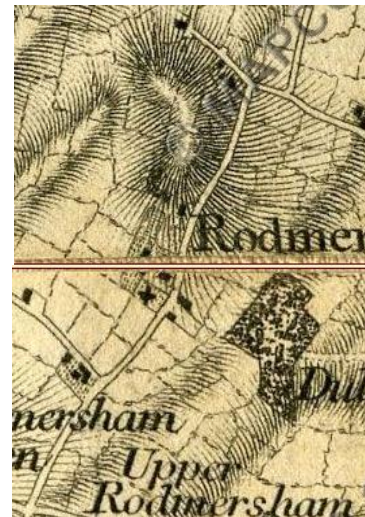
In such cases the Council will notify respective owners and, where appropriate, work with them and other stakeholders to investigate opportunities for removing the risk and securing the asset's future.

## APPENDIX 1

### Map regression



Saxton's map of Kent 1575



Captain William Mudge's map of Kent  
c.1800



Andrews topographical map  
of the county of Kent 1769



Ordnance Survey First Series 1816





Tithe map 1838 (Kent Archives)

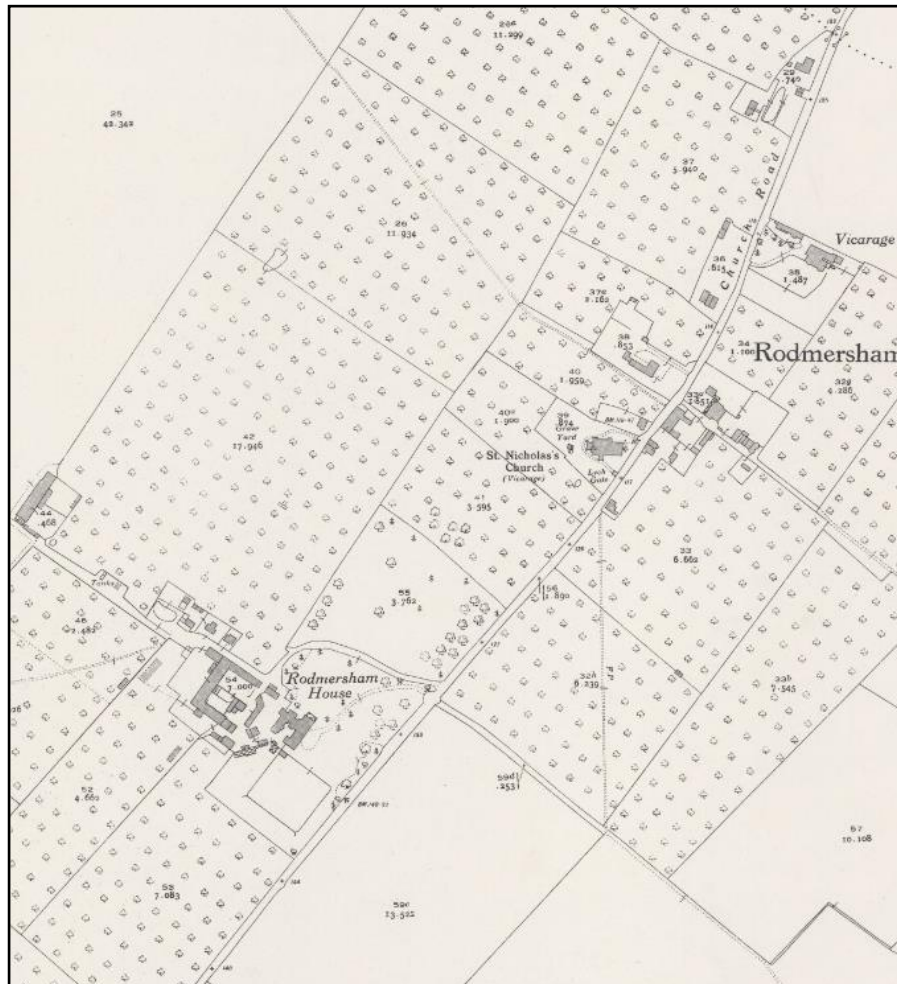


1871 Ordnance Survey map

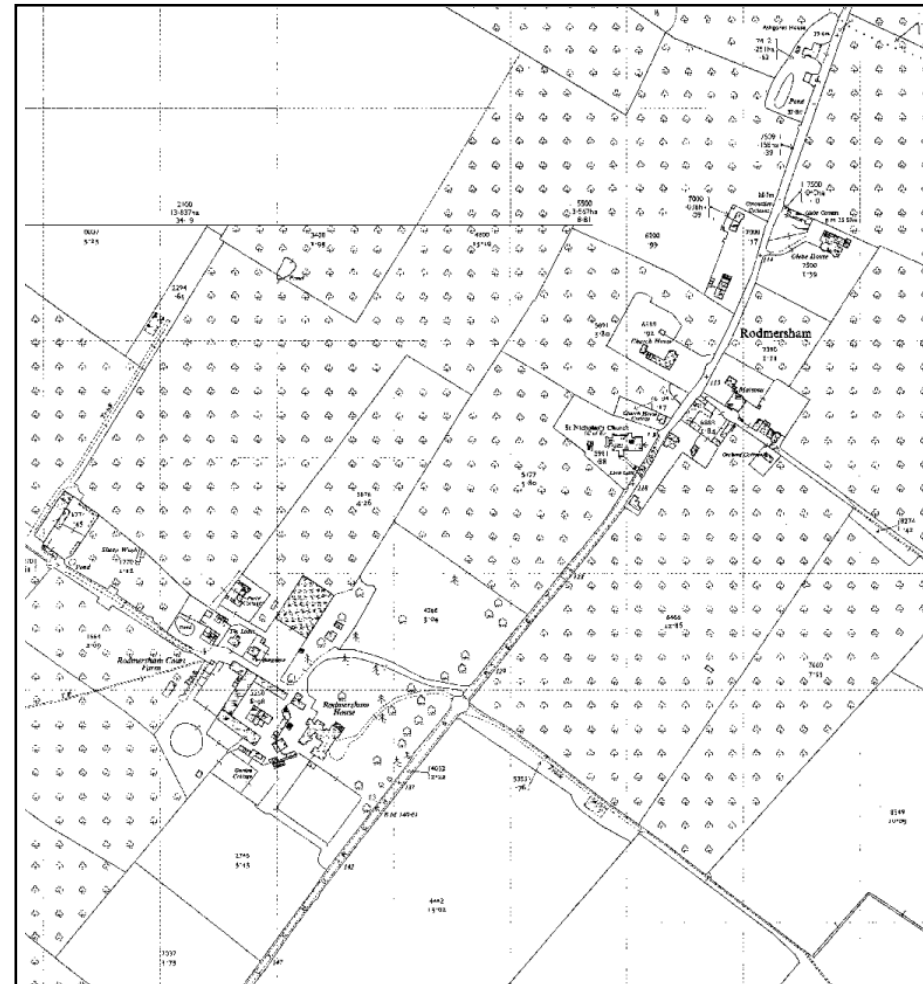


1896 Ordnance Survey map





1938 Ordnance Survey map



1957 Ordnance Survey map

## APPENDIX 2

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

The statutory list for Rodmersham is compiled by the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and is altered and amended from time to time. The list descriptions below are taken from the statutory list and were current in October 2021. For more detailed and up to date information please refer to the National Heritage List for England [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.



### CHURCH OF ST NICHOLAS Grade I

Parish church. C13 chancel, C14 nave, C15 west tower, restored 1875-93 by S.S. Stallwood. Flint with plain tiled roofs. Nave and aisles, west tower and chancel with south chapel. West tower in coursed and knapped flint with 4 times offset diagonal buttresses and plinth, string course, cornice and battlements, and battlemented octagonal vice to south east. C15 perpendicular lights, and double hollow chamfered and roll-moulded west doorway. C19 south porch, with wrought iron outer gates. Aisles with plinth and cornice to parapetted low pitch roof, with C15 Perpendicular traceried lights. Gable-roofed south chapel with C14 decorated windows. C19 Perpendicular style east window to chancel. Interior: double hollow chamfered tower-arch partly obscured by organ loft. Three bay nave arcade, with hollow chamfered and roll-moulded arches on octagonal piers with moulded bases and caps. North and south arcades with variations in moulding indicate different periods of build within C14. Roof of 4 crown- posts, with moulded tie beams. Cross-beam lean-to aisle roofs. North aisle with stair to (missing) rood loft. South aisle with double hollow chamfered arch and hollow chamfered surround to chapel on octagonal responds. South east chapel with 2 bay arcade of c.1200, now sedilia with billet roll mould, attached shafts with debased capitals after the Bapchild manner (see Church of St. Lawrence, Bapchild). Roof of 3 crown posts. Chamfered 2 bay arcade to form a canopy. Restored screen to chancel from nave. Sculptural fragment of medieval coffin lid on east wall of north aisle. The altar, reredos, brass altar rail, pulpit, octagonal font and reading desk are all C19. (See B.O.E. Kent II 1983, 435).



**CHURCH COTTAGE, CHURCH STREET** Grade II

House. C16. Timber framed and exposed close studding with plaster infill on first floor, rendered on ground floor, with plain tiled roof. Two storeys with exposed bressumer at first floor, and stacks projecting to end left and end right. Three wood casements on each floor. Entry by boarded door in rear, weatherboarded wing.



Church Cottage, Historic England Archive 1955

**CHURCH HOUSE, CHURCH STREET** Grade II

House. Early C18 and early C19. Chequered red and grey brick with plain tile roof. Rectangular 5 bay C18 house with 7 bay C19 wing added to left return elevation. Two storeys and paired modillion eaves cornice to roof with 3 gabled dormers and stack to end right with gable end of left return front to left with projecting end stack. Regular fenestration in C18 block of 5 glazing bar sashes in moulded surrounds on first floor and 4 C19 glazing bar sashes on ground floor with central door of 6 raised and fielded panels with semi-circular fanlight and open pediment on pilasters. One glazing bar sash on first floor and 1 tripartite sash on ground floor in gable end left. Over the door a fire insurance plate dated 1704.



Church House. Historic England Archive 1955

**MATSONS, CHURCH STREET (now Church House Farm)**  
Grade II

House. C16 and early C19. Red brick and slate roof with timber framed range to rear clad with red brick. Two storeys and basement with brick dentil cornice and parapet and stacks projecting at end left and to rear end left and rear right. Regular fenestration of 2 tripartite sashes and central sash on first floor, each under moulded pediments, and French door to left and tripartite sash to right on ground floor, with central door of 6 raised and fielded panels with semi-circular traceried fanlight and open pediment on pilasters. Basement opening bottom left. Interior: rear range with internal evidence of close-studded walls and crown post roof. C16 brick fireplace and stack.



Matsons (now Church House Farm) Historic England Archive 1955



## APPENDIX 3

### 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 landscapes).

#### *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.

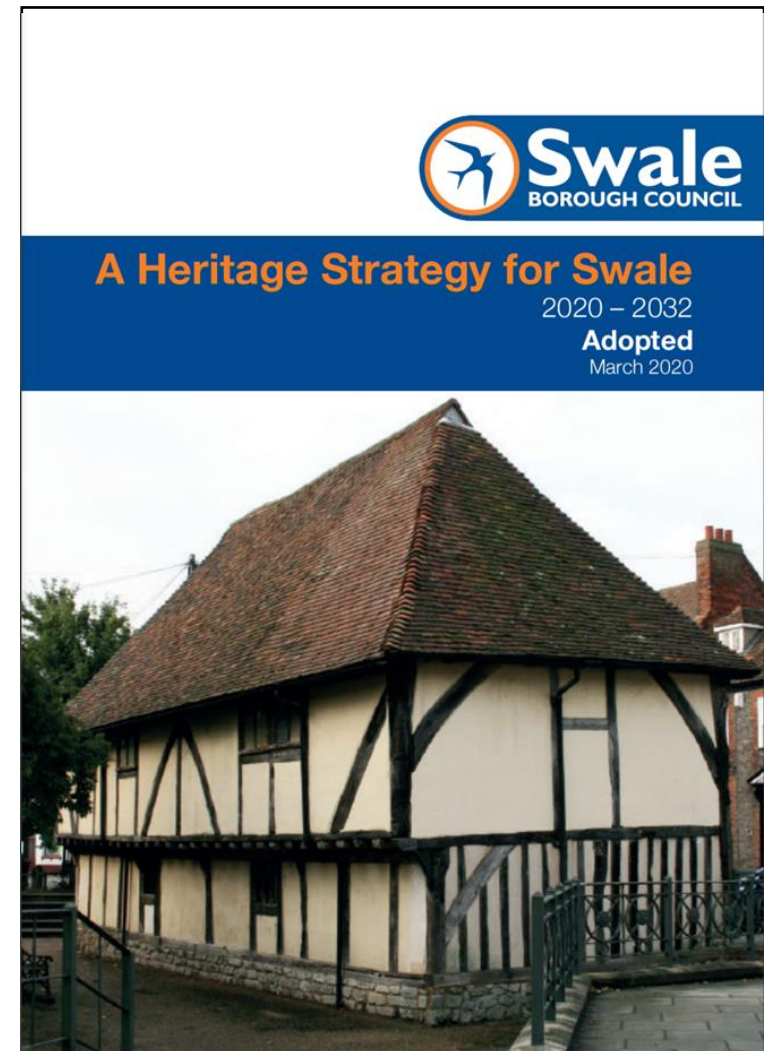
Swale Borough Council Planning and Development Guidelines No 8: Conservation Areas

### 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 4

### 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)

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 supporting 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 5

### Assessment of Significant Views

Views make a valuable contribution to the way in which the character or appearance of an place is 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 10 and described below:

**View 1:** Panoramic views from the top of the Rodmersham church tower reveal the hamlet in its historic agrarian landscape. They illustrate the strong connection between the hamlet and the surrounding farmland. They also provide visual links to other historic landmarks including the former Providence Chapel at Rodmersham Green, Scuttington Manor to the south-east, Rodmersham House to the south-west, Upper Rodmersham to the south and villages to the north. Views from the church tower are of high heritage significance.



**Plates 23 and 24:** Views from the church tower looking east and north-west (also see plate 1 looking south-east)

**View 2:** Views on approach to the hamlet from the north and south provide the immediate setting for the hamlet. The expansive farmland has provided the historic approach and the setting to Rodmersham for as long as it has existed. The contrast between the open landscape views and the relative enclosure created by buildings, walls and trees as one enters the settlement is all part of the experience of entering or passing through Rodmersham. Consequently the views are of heritage significance.



**Plates 25 and 26:** Views on approach from the north and the south (also see plate 20)



**Plate 27:** View from Ashgores House towards Scuttington Manor and Oast



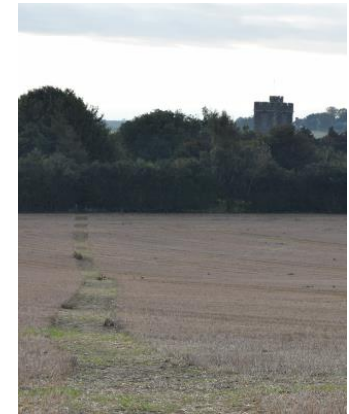
**View 3:** Views along Church Street are the way in which the most people enjoy and experience Rodmersham. Vistas develop with the subtle changes in the geometry of the road and with the seasons and buildings come and go from view in a way that enriches the experience. Views along Church Street are consequently of high heritage significance.



**Plate 28:** One of many views experienced as one passes along Church Street

**View 4:** The view towards Rodmersham from the slightly elevated land at Providence Chapel, Rodmersham Green, provides a visual connection between the two settlements. The footpath which connects them has been well used for centuries. The interplay between the church, the historic buildings around it, the mature trees, and the surrounding farmland provides a picturesque landscape panorama. The view is of high significance.

**View 5 and 8:** These are views of Rodmersham from well-used public footpaths. These views across farmland give a good impression of the modest scale of the settlement and the hierarchy of buildings around the church and its tower. These views are of high significance



**Plates 29 and 30:** Views from well used public footpaths

**View 6:** From Dully Road in the east the whole village is seen, the church tower providing a focal point. The view is of moderate to high significance.



**Plate 31:** View of Rodmersham from Dully Road

**View 7:** Views from within the heart of the village looking out across open countryside are few in number. Those that do exist are important as they provide a link between the agricultural history of the village and its farmland. They are of high significance.

For further information contact:

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