

Introduction

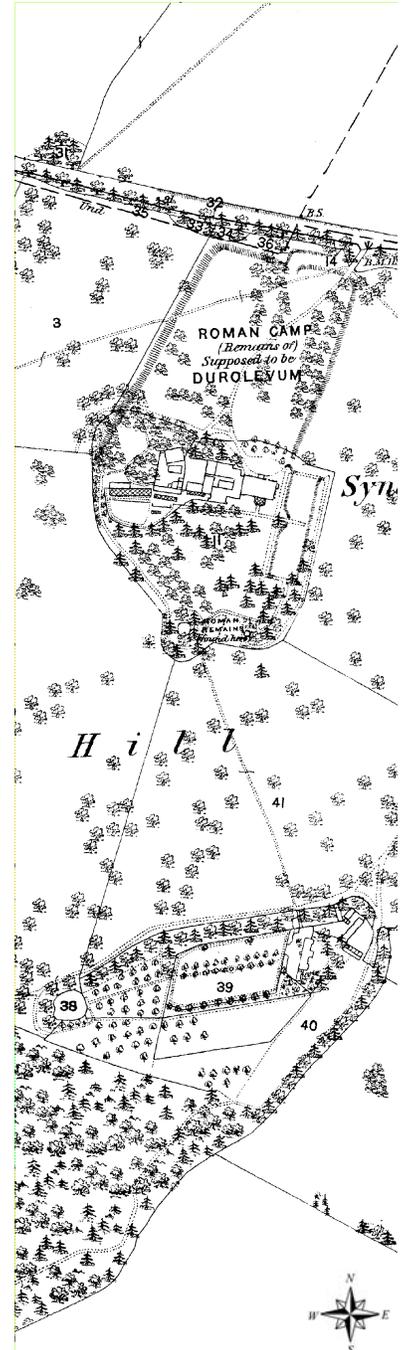
- 1.1 Syndale is situated towards the eastern end of the Borough of Swale, on the south side of London Road about 500 metres west of Ospringe village. The town of Sittingbourne is located approximately 9 kilometres to the west, with Faversham around 1 kilometre to the east. The area is dominated by fine landscaped parkland that has matured around the site of a large seventeenth-century house destroyed by fire in 1961. The area's special character also derives from the remnants of formal gardens nestled against managed woodland to the south, a scattering of Roman remains and clusters of traditional service and farm buildings previously associated with the Syndale estate.

Landscape description

- 2.1 The landform of Swale Borough rises gradually from the Swale and Thames Estuaries towards the North Downs Scarp. Newnham Valley, which runs along the western boundary of Syndale Conservation Area, is one of a series of dry chalk valleys that emerge from the crest of the Downs and cut through the landscape northwards. These strong landforms are emphasised by a network of woodlands and shaws that grow on their steep and less easily farmed slopes; Judd's Wood at Syndale is a good example. The landform northeast of Judd's Wood levels to form a small plateau before falling to the north and east towards Ospringe and Luddenham.
- 2.2 The geology of Syndale and its immediate surroundings is characterised by a mixture of Thanet, Oldhaven and Blackheath sands overlain with a complex mixture of brickearths and gravels. The deep, well-drained silty soils have traditionally supported a variety of crops, most notably fruit and hops.

Special interest of the area

- 3.1 The Syndale Conservation Area includes the whole of the landscaped parkland, together with its perimeter tree belts. It extends from London Road at the north and Stone Chapel at its north-west corner, to Coxett Hill at the southern boundary. A Victorian estate cottage, Little Coxett, is located at the southern edge of the conservation area, with Syndale Farmhouse, Syndale Bottom and Syndale Farm Cottages included to the west.

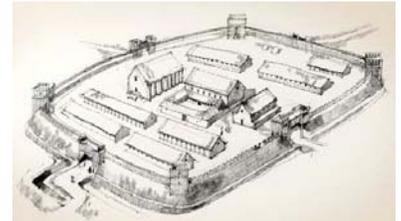


Extract from the 1865 Ordnance Survey showing the former Syndale House and part of its estate

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The Roman Fort and Roman Watling Street

- 3.2 Archaeological excavations at Syndale suggest that it was likely to have been the site of a Roman fort large enough to accommodate around 1000 soldiers. It has been suggested that this was the renowned Roman station Durolevum, but the argument is as yet unproven. Geophysical analysis appears to show that the rectangular fort covered approximately 4 acres and was surrounded by a wide ditch and bank, although little is now visible on the surface. The Roman road, Watling Street, ran along the northern edge of the fort, but was moved several metres northward to the current position of London Road in the early nineteenth century. The Syndale Motel buildings are located at what would have been the south-west corner of the fort.



Reconstruction of the Roman fort at Syndale

Stone Chapel

- 3.3 Around 100 metres north of Watling Street are the remains of Stone Chapel, a fourth-century Romano-British temple or mausoleum, now a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The Roman remains at the heart of the site are characterised by their alternating bands of tufa and thin red brick. These pagan remains were unusually incorporated by the Saxons into a Christian church in the eleventh century and the chapel was further extended about two centuries later using local flints. It is likely that the chapel was abandoned as a religious building in the 1530s and has since become ruinous. The chapel remains have been stabilized and are now surrounded by arable land. Their setting is greatly enhanced by a copse of trees immediately to its north, which provide an attractive variegated backdrop to the remains.
- 3.4 Numerous Roman artefacts and pottery have been found in the immediate vicinity of Stone Chapel, along with evidence of a substantial Roman cemetery a few hundred metres to the east.



Stone Chapel

Syndale Park Motel

- 3.5 On the south side of London Road, the land rises sharply up Judd's Hill to the site of the current Syndale Motel, located on a plateau commanding excellent prospects over surrounding parkland, woods and Newnham Valley to the west. This topography also affords great prominence to buildings on top of the hill. The crest of the hill was the site of Syndale House, a seventeenth-century neo-Palladian country house built by the parliamentarian Daniel Judd, also renowned locally for the manufacture of gunpowder. A mansard roof was probably added in the nineteenth century.



The former Syndale House

3.6 Syndale House was destroyed by fire in 1961 and was replaced soon after by the Syndale Park Motel, consisting of partial remains of the original house and a collection of American-style motel buildings and pre-fabricated accommodation. The pink-rendered finish used throughout the complex draws unrewarded attention, especially in views from the east and north east, with the poorly composed design failing to provide the commanding appearance that this elevated site demands.



The Syndale Motel

3.7 Directly to the west of the motel buildings is a mid nineteenth-century stable yard, previously associated with Syndale House. Architecturally the most significant part is the long red-brick south range with rooms in the roof running across the site from east to west. It is a good survival, with elegant blind arcading, window arches and decorative banding on the north elevation all picked out in gault brick. The arcading is punctuated towards the east and west ends by narrow two-storey stair towers that step forward and break the eaves with stone-dressed gables and kneelers. The east end of the stable range terminates at another good quality red and gault brick building of similar date, but over a full two storeys. The historic stable complex is entirely roofed in slate.



The former stable ranges

3.8 The stable yard is nicely paved in a combination of York stone slabs and square red and blue brick stable paviers. Directly to the north, the historic remains of what must once have been a larger freestanding coach house are now much altered, with modern fenestration, roof and clock tower. The complex of service buildings accommodates small commercial and leisure uses.



The burr brick folly

3.9 The south side of the stable ranges is significantly compromised by late C20th development, including a large white-brick sports hall and a cluster of unremarkable holiday lodges. Built into the hillside to the east is a new cedar-clad house with garage.

3.10 A burr brick folly in the form of an arch is located just to the south of the motel and is typical of the early nineteenth-century Romantic tradition.

Syndale Park

3.11 Syndale Park is one of the best-preserved designed landscapes in the Borough of Swale. Its undulating ground completely encircles the Motel and is irregularly dotted with fine mature specimen trees, including Blue Atlas Cedar, Lime, Turkey Oak, London Plane, Beach and English Oak. The parkland flows down from the Motel to the bottom of Judd's Hill on all sides, but extends further on flatter ground to the



Syndale Park

east, where it terminates in a dense tree belt at its eastern edge.

3.12 The parkland was probably laid out in the late eighteenth century as informal, naturalised grounds to Syndale House, in the manner popularised nationally by Capability Brown. The combination of rolling landscape and a liberal scattering of mature trees produces constantly changing panoramas as you pass through it, offering tantalising glimpse views of distant buildings and woodland.

3.13 The park may once have been used for deer, but is now for the grazing of sheep. Pasture is becoming more common in the fertile fruit belts of the North Kent plain and is having a dramatic effect on its character. In this case, however, it is long established and emphasises Syndale's distinct landform in a way that would be less apparent through the leafy canopies of orchards and hop gardens.



Mature specimen trees



Views of Syndale Motel across the park

Estate and farm buildings

3.14 Approximately 300 metres southeast of the Motel is the former Syndale estate dairy and gatehouse, both accessed via a track that meanders through the park from its north-eastern corner. The two-storey gatehouse with slate roof, large segmental access arch and clock tower is probably contemporary with the mid C19th Syndale stable ranges, and demonstrates the same quality of design and polychromatic brickwork. The single-storey dairy is likely to be older, perhaps dating from the 1820s or 30s, although its origins are unclear. The rendered building is particularly notable for its three polygonal bay windows with tall four-pane casements and neo-Tudor hood moulds on its east elevation. The building is roofed in slate with lead roll dressings. Late nineteenth-century Ordnance Survey plans show elaborate formal gardens west of the dairy, with avenues of trees leading to a circular pond, which is all that now remains of these ornamental gardens.



Syndale Dairy



Syndale Gatehouse

3.15 The dairy backs onto Judd's Wood, a small area of woodland extending from the southern edge of the park to Coxett Hill. At the south-eastern corner of the woodland is Coxett Lodge, a typical late-nineteenth century yellow and red brick estate cottage with clay tile roof.

3.16 To the west of Judd's Wood, in Syndale Bottom, are the Grade II listed Syndale Cottages, now one house. There were formerly oast kilns on its eastern elevation, and its appearance is now characterised by an intriguing mix of domestic and agricultural detailing. The walls are partly clad in render and weatherboarding, the remainder constructed in exposed red brick. The roof is covered with Kent peg tiles.



The Dairy gardens in the late nineteenth century.
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3.17 On the western side of Faversham Road is Syndale Farm. The Grade II listed Syndale Farmhouse is at the heart of the complex, with an elegant C18th rendered front and fine Kent peg tile roof to an older timber-framed building. Directly to its south is a small thatched barn, the two separated by a track leading westwards to Beacon Farm. The farmyard is to the north, extended in the twentieth century with a group of modern Atcost sheds.



Coxett Lodge

3.18 Approximately 100 metres southwest of Syndale Farmhouse are Syndale Farm Cottages, two symmetrical pairs of late nineteenth-century, yellow-brick cottages. The decorative Kent peg roof and tile-hanging, gablets over the first-floor windows and the ornamental hipped porch canopies distinguish them among the best Victorian estate cottages in Swale. They are remarkably well preserved, with all original doors and windows remaining intact.



Syndale Cottages

Highways

3.19 Syndale Conservation Area is bounded on three sides by roads. London Road cuts across the northern edge of the conservation area, now several metres north of Roman Watling Street, and the rumbling of traffic can be heard throughout the otherwise tranquil environment of the park. The road nonetheless pays some regard to its rural surroundings, with soft verges and simple timber post-and-wire fences on its southern side. Inappropriate concrete kerbs are used on the northern edge of the road and right around the roundabout leading to the Western Link.



Syndale Farmhouse

3.20 The character of Faversham Road and Coxett Hill contrasts markedly with that of London Road. These are both narrow, meandering routes, characterised by their soft, grassy verges and typically rural boundary treatments, including mature hedgerows and timber post and rail fences. However, there are some intrusive overhead cables.



Syndale Farm Cottages

Further information

Swale Borough Council (SBC) and Kent County Council (KCC), *Rural Lanes Study* (1997)
SBC, *Landscape Characterisation Study* (2005)
John Newman, *The Buildings of England: North East and East Kent* (1983)
Paul Wilkinson, *Swale Archaeological Survey* (2001)

Historic photographs of Syndale



Historic aerial photograph of the former Syndale House



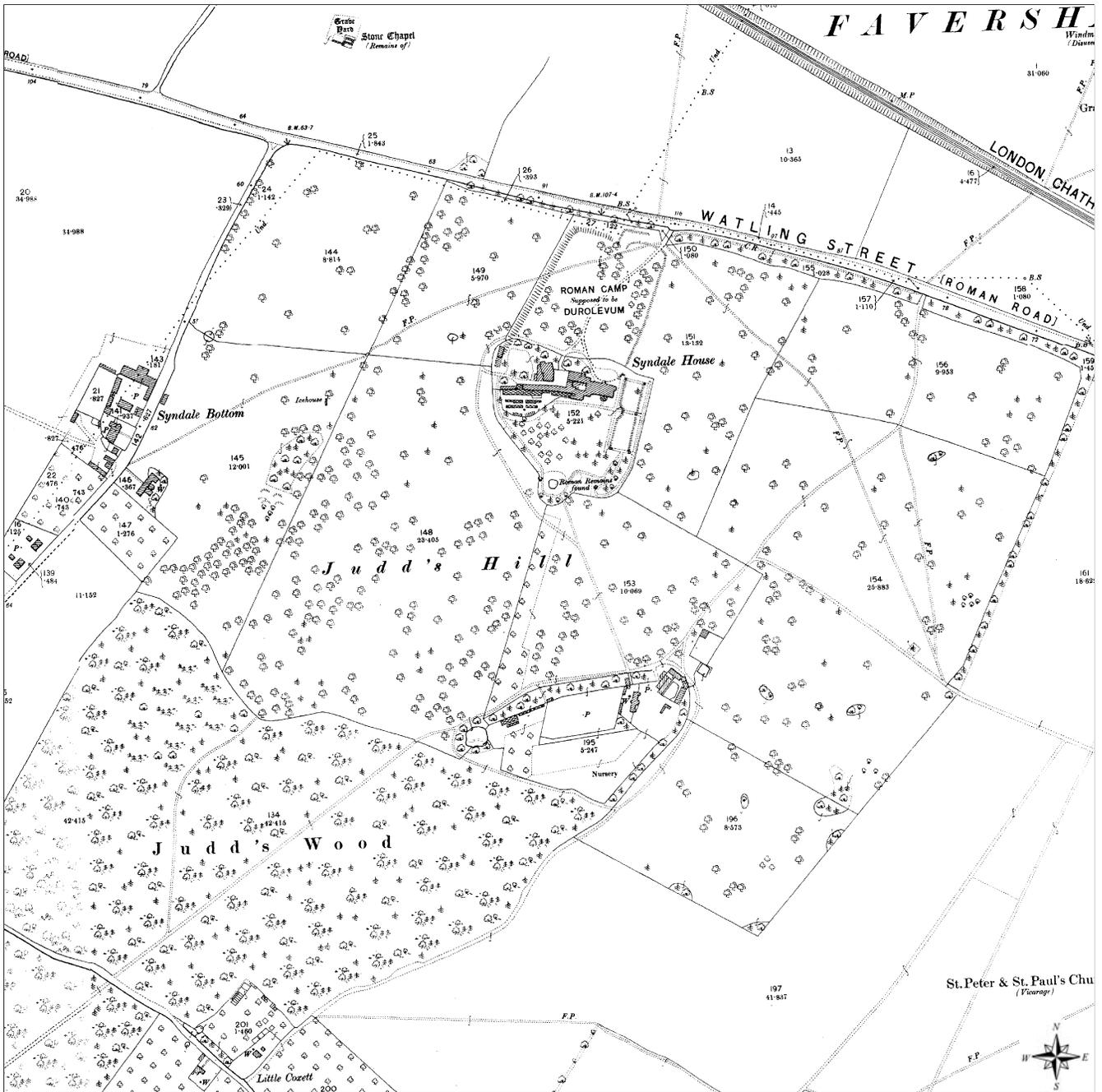
Historic photograph of the former Syndale House, surrounding parkland and tennis courts

Historic maps of Syndale



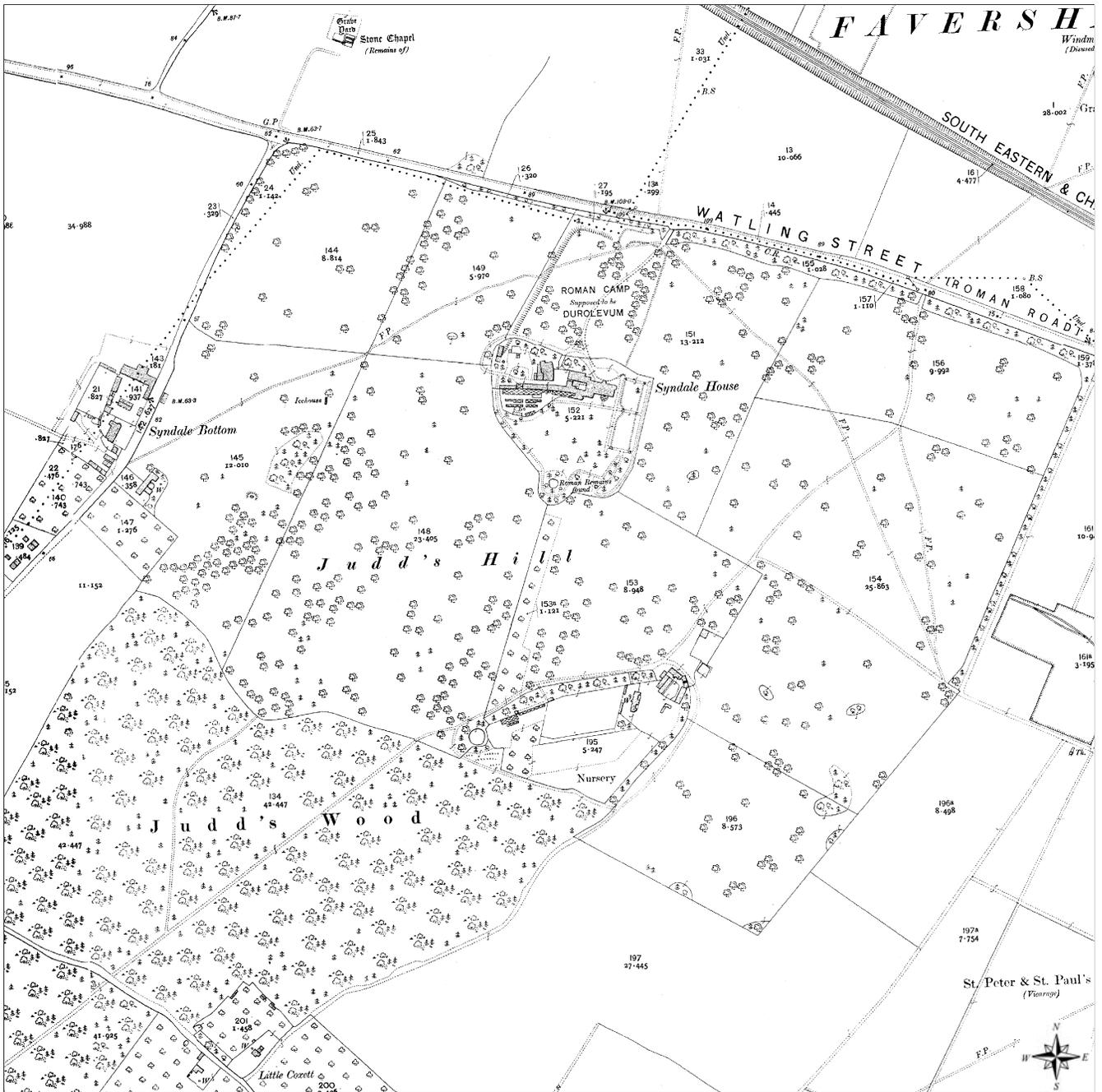
1864 Ordnance Survey map of Syndale (to unknown scale)

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1896 Ordnance Survey map of Syrdale (to unknown scale)

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1907 Ordnance Survey map of Syndale (to unknown scale)

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Proposals and Policies for the Preservation and Enhancement of Syndale Conservation Area

Planning policy context

- 4.1 Swale Borough Local Plan 2008.
Kent and Medway Structure Plan 2006.

Supplementary planning guidance

- 5.1 *Listed Buildings: a guide for owners and occupiers*; adopted November 1993.
Conservation Areas; adopted April 1993.
The Conservation of Traditional Farm Buildings; adopted November 1993.
Designing an Extension; adopted April 1993.
Ospringe Parish Design Statement; 2007.
Kent Design; adopted February 2008.

Management Strategy

- 6.1 In response to the designation of the conservation area at Syndale, Swale Borough Council will:
- Ensure consistent decision-making based on published policies and guidance.
 - Undertake photographic surveys and recording in order to monitor change.
 - Use enforcement powers in line with good practice.
 - Maintain a Buildings at Risk Register.
 - Work with partners to bring forward the redevelopment of the motel site and the continued husbandry of the parkland.

Repair and maintenance of, and improvements to, buildings, boundaries and other structures

- 7.1 The palette of materials present in the built environment of Syndale Conservation Area is of central importance to the special character and local distinctiveness of the place; key materials in this regard include locally manufactured red and yellow stock bricks as well as gault bricks used for featurework; Kent peg roofing tiles; knapped flints which are locally sourced and of good regularity and colour quality; long straw thatch; and Welsh slate. The retention of these indigenous materials will be important in preserving the character of the place; the use of these materials is also likely to be preferred in any new works of improvement and alteration.
- 7.2 Boundaries are generally defined by stock fencing, chestnut paling or timber pickets. The continued use of these “low key” boundary treatments will be important in maintaining the character of the place.
- 7.3 Owners and occupiers will be encouraged to seek the highest possible standards in the repair, maintenance and improvement of all the buildings, boundaries and other

structures that contribute to the special character of Syndale, and to employ traditional work practices and materials wherever appropriate.

Management of the local landscape

- 8.1 The mature parkland with its undulating pasture and fine trees is perhaps the area's most distinct feature. Landscapes, like buildings, need maintenance and repair if they are to stand the test of time. Some of the trees are just reaching maturity after 150 years, some are over mature and others are in their infancy. Long term planning is required if the original aspirations of the landscape designer are to be respected and the parkland is to be sustained for future generations.
- 8.2 The parkland at Syndale is well managed and despite storm damage to trees in the 1980s the informality of the "Capability Brown" style designed landscape is still very apparent. Investment in strategic tree planting in the recent decades has insured against old age. Similar proactive management, respecting the character of the historic landscape, is to be encouraged.
- 8.3 Coppiced woodlands, grazing land and hedgerows are a feature of the conservation area, particularly in the Newnham valley. They too should continue to be positively managed.
- 8.4 Six weeks' notice must be given to the Borough Council in writing before any works are undertaken to trees within a conservation area.

Syndale Motel

- 9.1 The site of the Motel and surrounding buildings offers real potential for enhancement through redevelopment. For any comprehensive scheme of redevelopment the Council will require a development brief as a vehicle for identifying constraints and opportunities and a stimulus to imaginative high quality design.

The public highway

- 10.1 Faversham Road, London Road and Coxett Hill make their own contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. The sensitive treatment of the highway environment will therefore be important, including the retention of the informal character and shape of Faversham Road and Coxett Hill; the retention of soft edges, verges and roadside banks; the choice of materials used and the manner of their use; and the restrained use of signing and road markings.
- 10.2 Works to the public highway will be carried out in accordance with the guidelines prepared by the highway authority for works in conservation sensitive areas as set out in The Highway Management Reference Book produced by Kent County Council. Conventional traffic engineering solutions may not be appropriate.
- 10.3 Wherever possible further clutter in the highway from the statutory companies will be avoided (eg. additional poles, overhead wires, and cabinets).

Other enhancement measures

11.1 Other possible enhancement measures include:

1. The substitution of concrete road kerbs with granite kerbs or grass verges as and when the opportunity arises;
2. The removal/replacement of the concrete post fencing along the north boundary of the London Road;
3. The removal of telegraph poles and overhead supply lines along Faversham Road.

Development Services
Swale Borough Council
June 2008