

6. Faversham Town Conservation Area Management Strategy

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

Conservation is not about preventing change: Faversham Town is part of a living, thriving, active community where change is needed to sustain and meet its future needs. It is about positively managing change so that what the community cherishes today can be properly looked after and passed on to future generations in good condition.

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

In the case of Faversham Town, the largest conservation Area in the borough, the management strategy is also intended to provide a route plan to see the conservation area continues to thrive and is managed sustainably by providing positive steps which can be taken to continue to improve its condition and remove the risks.

Swale Borough Council's adopted Heritage Strategy outlines processes for regular monitoring of Swale's Heritage and promotes active participation of all stakeholders.

6.1 Heritage Values

6.1.1 Social, Economic and Environmental Values

Faversham's heritage has various economic, community, cultural and environmental values:

- Most of Faversham's historic buildings are in productive use (commercial, residential, leisure and other uses) as part of the infrastructure of the town.
- Faversham's historic environment and heritage attractions create competitive advantage for the town, attracting heritage-based tourism and increased footfall and expenditure.
- The town centre 'offer' reflects its different roles as a centre for the local community and also for tourists.
- The quality of the historic environment is a key factor in creating positive perceptions of the town, which is an important factor in attracting investment.

- Faversham's diverse range of historic buildings provides distinctive floorspace for retail, micro-businesses, enterprises, community facilities, visitor facilities, display space, visitor accommodation and other uses.
- The Town Centre provides a mix of uses (including residential, commercial and community facilities) in close proximity (walkable neighbourhoods).
- The town provides good permeability and connectivity for pedestrians so supports active travel
- Faversham's historic environment includes multiple green spaces, formal and informal, trees, landscape and water features, providing valuable habitats supporting biodiversity.
- Research shows that historic environments support a higher proportion of independent businesses, and this is readily apparent in Faversham.
- Faversham's traditional forms of townscape mean that most streets and spaces are overlooked by active building frontages, creating natural surveillance.
- Faversham's historic buildings have proved to be durable over centuries and conservation preserves the embodied energy invested in their materials and construction.
- Terraced building forms provide natural insulation from adjoining properties.

The above factors make clear that there is a strong link between conservation of Faversham's built heritage and achieving more effective, inclusive and sustainable forms of growth.

6.1.2 Realising the Potential

The quality of the historic environment is likely to be a factor in making Faversham attractive to investors, visitors, and as a place to live. Railway services to London similarly make the town attractive.

Faversham has higher commercial property prices and rentals than other Swale towns. Commercial and residential viability continues to be good. Whilst the higher prices are a positive indicator, there are issues of affordability for people on low incomes.

Heritage needs to be considered against a wide social, economic and environmental context if it is to realise its economic, community and cultural potential.

6.2 Heritage-led Economic Development

Town Centre: The role of Town Centres continues to change, reflecting changes in employment and live/work patterns, online retail and a greater emphasis on food and drink, recreation, culture and personal services.



6.3 Sustainability

Against the context of climate change, development and other works should seek to preserve or enhance not just character, but also the intrinsically sustainable characteristics of Faversham. This includes:

Mixed use: Maintaining the mix of uses across the area, including the concentration of facilities and employment in the town centre and surrounding neighbourhoods.

Connectivity and permeability: Ensuring that existing pedestrian paths and connections are maintained and that new development has high levels of connectivity and permeability in its design and layout, to enable easy pedestrian movement.

Housing: Prioritising brownfield sites and also sites within or in walking distance of the Town Centre when making housing site allocations.

Floorspace: Ensuring that all floorspace, including upper floors, is in full productive use.

Green infrastructure: Maintaining Faversham's green infrastructure, including trees and green spaces, and seeking biodiversity net gain in new development.

Embodied energy: Retaining historic building fabric, to preserve the embodied energy used in their materials and construction.

Retrofitting: Taking opportunities to enhance building performance and efficiency, whilst maintaining the special interest of the building.

Together, these will help to maintain Faversham's pattern of walkable neighbourhoods, making efficient use of land and property, supporting biodiversity and taking opportunities to enhance building performance.

6.4 Protection

6.4.1 Commercial properties in shopping streets tend to have traditional frontages with a fascia for advertisements. This helps to ensure that advertisements are sensitively proportioned. However, in some instances, advertisements are bigger than the space for fascia signs, or there is no fascia. These are harmful to character. An area of advertisement special control could be considered, resources allowing.



Signage: The example on the left has a sensitively designed fascia sign. The examples on the right are much more obtrusive.

6.4.2 Householder alterations

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

However, the Conservation Area Character Appraisal has identified some alterations which have involved the removal of historic features such as traditional sash windows, doors, roof coverings and demolition of chimney stacks. These alterations are harmful to character, particularly when they affect a symmetrical pair or a terrace, where the impact of ill-considered alterations can be more obvious.

Many minor alterations to unlisted residential buildings can be undertaken without the need for planning permission but the cumulative impact on historic and/or traditional properties can have a harmful effect on the 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, where appropriate, may be requested in relation to planning applications for extensions and/or alterations.

Faversham Town has an active Article 4 in place for a number of properties, Full list of the current properties within Article 4 direction can be viewed at <https://swale.gov.uk/planning-and-regeneration/article-4-directions>. The use of an Article 4 Direction brings some householder alterations which are currently classed as permitted development under planning control, to ensure that alterations are positively managed through the planning system.

A full review of the current Article 4 may be undertaken to address future requirements of EV charging and solar panels.

Householder alterations under control by an Article 4 Direction at Faversham Town Conservation Area include the following:

- Replacement windows and doors.
- Changes to roof coverings.
- Removal of traditional chimney stacks.
- The installation of solar photovoltaic panels on the front wall or roof slope of buildings.

- Installing rooflights in the front roof slope.
- Alterations to or demolition of fences, railings and boundary walls.
- Adding a front porch.
- Replacing a front garden with a hard surface.

6.4.3 Unauthorised alterations

The conservation area review also revealed that unauthorised alterations to buildings carried out without planning permission (or listed building consent) pose a significant threat to the character of the conservation area.

An essential component of any conservation area management strategy is an effective planning enforcement strategy which prioritises enforcement action relating to heritage conservation.

Unauthorised works: Effective heritage protection depends on enforcement where unauthorised work take place, including for works controlled by Article 4 Direction. Where possible, unauthorised works shall be addressed through negotiation with owners. But formal enforcement may be considered where negotiation fails to achieve results. Unless enforcement action is taken to address harmful development, the character of the conservation area and general environmental quality will erode incrementally. Regular updating and distribution of guidance on heritage protection can be useful in avoiding unauthorised works.

Deterioration: Enforcement action for deteriorating properties could include use of Urgent Works or Repairs notices. This should be used where more informal or collaborative approaches have been unsuccessful. An indication that enforcement action is being considered may be sufficient in some instances to encourage owners to act. In cases where the heritage asset is subject to neglect, compulsory purchase may be considered, possibly followed by transfer of the asset to a public, private or community sector body.

6.5 Effective Planning

6.5.1 Statutory Duties

There are numerous statutory duties for local planning authorities, relating to heritage. These include:

- Planning duties with regard to listed buildings - Planning (Listed Building & Conservation Areas) Act 1990, section 66 (1) and following;
- Duties with regard to listed building consent applications - Planning (Listed Building & Conservation Areas) Act 1990, section 16;
- Control of works to listed buildings - Planning (Listed Building & Conservation Areas) Act 1990, sections 8 and following;
- Duties regarding designation of conservation areas - Planning (Listed Building & Conservation Areas) Act 1990, section 69;
- Duties regarding appraisal of conservation areas - Planning (Listed Building & Conservation Areas) Act 1990, section 71 and following;
- Duties regarding development and conservation areas - Planning (Listed Building & Conservation Areas) Act 1990, section 72.

In addition, there are heritage dimensions in undertaking Sustainability Analysis, Strategic Environmental Assessment, and Environmental Impact Assessments.

To ensure positive planning, with a focus on design and placemaking, the following is recommended.

Positive Planning: The Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan processes should be used to plan positively for Faversham, to conserve the historic environment and realise its economic, cultural and community potential, against the context of climate change. This could include:

- Building on Faversham's potential as a historic market town, commuter town, centre for tourism, and local centre. Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan revisions can create statutory policy to help achieve this.
- Identifying housing opportunities to meet local need within the urban core, for example through allocation of small and medium brownfield sites in the new Neighbourhood Plan.

- Supporting the creative and careful adaptation of historic buildings and structures to accommodate changing needs, whilst preserving or enhancing their special architectural or historic interest.
- Seek to secure very high-quality, creative design to complement and enhance the existing spatial and townscape character of the Conservation Area and making clear that conservation area status is not a barrier to innovation or green design (many historic buildings were examples of creative and innovative design, when they were built).

Master planning and site briefs: Master-planning and development or design briefs could be prepared for key sites within and around the Conservation Area. The proposed replacement Faversham Neighbourhood Plan includes area-regeneration policies and site allocations which set specific requirements for development.

Guidance: Clear planning guidance should be prepared to address current pressures, including guidance on addition of photo-voltaic panels to historic properties.

The potential for new development within Faversham Town Conservation Area will need to be considered appropriately. 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 affecting the setting of the conservation area is likely to be harmful to its heritage significance. The local planning authority is required to pay special attention to preserving the setting of the conservation area (or the setting of any listed buildings) in any plan making or decision taking.

6.5.2 Statutes, policies and guidance

When a conservation area is designated, there are statutes, planning policies and regulations which govern which types of development require planning permission and the way that the local planning authority undertakes plan-making and decision-making. The statutes and policies that directly affect designated conservation areas are outlined within the document. It is these statutes and policies that provide the formal framework for managing change in conservation areas.

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

A key element of planning policy is the Swale Borough Local Plan which includes policies specifically relating to conservation areas and heritage conservation.

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

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

There is also a wealth of published guidance on positively managing change in conservation areas. Swale Borough Council has adopted supplementary planning documents (SPDs) which are listed in Appendix 2 (bibliography). Historic England has also published a range of guidance and advice notes which are listed in the bibliography.

6.6 Swale local heritage list

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

The Local Heritage List:

- raises awareness of an area's local heritage assets and their importance to local distinctiveness;
- informs developers, owners, council officers and members about buildings within the local authority boundary that are desirable to retain and protect;
- provides guidance and specialist advice to owners to help protect the character and setting of those buildings, structures, sites and landscapes;
- helps the council in its decision-making when discussing proposals and determining planning applications;
- and
- records the nature of the local historic environment more accurately.

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

Several buildings in Faversham Town Conservation Area may be eligible for inclusion within the Swale Local Heritage List.

Buildings which are already protected because they fall within the curtilage of a listed building are excluded from the list.

6.7 Public realm

The public realm (that is those areas which fall between the buildings and are accessible to and enjoyed by the public) makes a significant positive contribution to the special character of Faversham Town Conservation Area. The highway and footways fall within the public realm.

In 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, street lighting and off-the-shelf road signs all have the potential to detract from the special architectural and historic character.

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

Restrained use of highway signing and road markings is important throughout the conservation area. Where signs, road markings, street furniture, salt bins, rubbish bins or utility boxes are deemed necessary, they should be located and designed sensitively and in consultation with the local community.

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

The KCC Highways Asset Management and Inspections Team has prepared a draft Highway Works and Heritage Assets Protocol which has yet to be finalised and go through consultation.

The conservation area has a good number of overhead cables and telegraph poles. Where possible, opportunities should be taken to investigate the removal of redundant overhead cables, reducing the number of poles and potential undergrounding of services.

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

Public realm: opportunities for enhancement

- An audit of public signage (including highway signage) could be undertaken to establish whether all current signage and road markings are necessary, well designed and appropriately located.
- An audit of street furniture (bollards, benches, bins, salt bins, bus stops etc.) could be undertaken to establish whether they are necessary, well-designed and appropriately located.
- An audit of overhead supply lines and poles could be undertaken with the statutory undertakers to establish whether there is any scope to remove any overhead cables or poles or to relocate services underground.
- Consideration could be given to the replacement of concrete highway kerbs with more traditional kerbs.

Faversham's public realm (streets, squares, and other spaces) are as important to character as buildings. They include protected historic features, including ground surfaces, lamps and bollards. Green spaces and landscape are also an important

part of character.

Faversham's public spaces have economic value, accommodating a range of uses, including festivals and events. Streets and spaces influence movement and accessibility, so affect economic viability, especially in the town centre. Streets and spaces also have community value and support active travel, recreation and social interaction.

There are also areas of public realm that cause harm to the character and appearance of the area, in particular public car parks.

To address this and ensure consistency in the quality of public realm schemes and works, the following is recommended:

Quality and consistency: An integrated and coordinated approach could be agreed between the various council departments and other organisations involved in decisions and investment affecting the public realm. This may be based around a public realm design code, with sufficient detail to ensure consistency, but flexible to allow creative responses to different sites and areas. This would include design of highway authority works, as highway infrastructure forms a major part of the Town's public realm.

Audit: An audit shall be undertaken to identify heritage features and ground surfaces, look for opportunities to improve the public realm and to reduce street clutter where possible. A community project to encourage wider participation may be considered.

Accessibility: A key consideration in future regeneration and public realm schemes could be overcoming challenges to improve access to historic places and environments for pedestrians with a range of mobilities.

Carparks: Enhancement schemes may be prepared for Swale's surface public car parks. Schemes may enable multiple uses of car parks, including occasional events, markets and other social and economic activities. The environment of car parks may be improved by use of attractive and durable surface materials, inclusion of clear pedestrian routes and introduction of trees, planting and greenery.

6.8 Trees and hedgerows

Trees and hedgerows play an important role in the special character of Faversham Town. They also contribute significantly to wildlife habitat and biodiversity.

The retention and active management of trees and hedgerows should be encouraged and opportunities for new planting should be considered when possible.

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

Trees and hedgerows: opportunities for enhancement

- An audit of trees and hedgerows may be undertaken to establish whether there is any scope for better management, additional protection through tree preservation orders, or additional planting.

6.9 Heritage at risk

Currently there are a no of buildings in Faversham on Historic England's or Swale Borough Council's Heritage at Risk Registers.

The Heritage at Risk Register and information about Historic England's role, the advice and funding available, and useful publications and guidance are all available on their website. The following information is taken from Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register:

"The Heritage at Risk Register includes historic buildings and sites that are at risk of loss through neglect, decay or development, or are vulnerable to becoming so. It includes all types of designated heritage assets, including Conservation Areas, which are designated by Local Planning Authorities.

"The aim of the Register is to focus attention on those places in greatest need. Historic England in partnership with others, it is able to help tackle heritage at risk. We work with owners, friends' groups, developers and other stakeholders to find imaginative solutions for historic places and sites at risk across England.

“Once a year Historic England asks every local authority in England to consider the state of its conservation areas and fill in (and update as appropriate) risk assessment questionnaires for those that cause concern or are believed to no longer be at risk.

Pressure for development within the gaps and on the periphery of the conservation area poses a potential threat but it can be controlled through normal planning processes.

6.10 Monitoring and review

An important component of any conservation area management strategy is periodic monitoring and review. The Council should periodically review progress on the proposals in the management strategy.

As part of the review process, it is recommended that:

- A photographic record of the buildings and spaces be undertaken.
- A register of enforcement cases be maintained and monitored.
- Statutory list addresses be checked and, where necessary, updated.
- Conservation area boundaries should be checked periodically and, where appropriate updated, to ensure that they are still relevant.

Having completed this Character Appraisal and Management Strategy, any future appraisal should be a relatively routine process so long as monitoring takes place in the intervening period.