

# BREDGAR PARISH COUNCIL



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Heritage Strategy Feedback  
Planning Services  
Swale Borough Council  
Swale House  
East Street  
Sittingbourne  
Kent  
ME10 3HT

## **Re: Swale Heritage Strategy Consultation - Comments**

Dear sir or madam,

Bredgar Parish Council (BPC) value our Swale Heritage most highly. Getting the balance right between preserving the past, living in the present and creating the future ( landscapes, heritage sites, buildings worthy of being listed for future generations ) is an important responsibility.

BPC has reviewed the Heritage Strategy consultation document and commend it as an impressive and exhaustive piece of work; SBC are on the right track. On that basis the following BPC comments are mostly ones of emphasis.

1. In the 2015 Heritage Asset Review concerning historic landscape, p.25, the importance of “setting” is mentioned. This is a tremendously important point. The built heritage of Swale is embedded in the landscape heritage of Swale, which is equally important. The exigencies of modern agricultural practice have degraded the landscape considerably, and while it is difficult to halt the march of agricultural efficiency, it does seem there is a gross mismatch between how well buildings have been protected, in terms of their heritage, and how badly hedgerows and traditional field structures have been neglected. Iconic Swale sights, like sheep grazing under cherry trees, have almost vanished, and whole orchards are – even in the AONB – swathed in

polytunnel plastic. The balance needs to be better addressed, with greater powers given to prevent the spoilation of the landscape and the setting of our built heritage.

2. It would be good if there were more clarity about the administrative structure within SBC dealing with heritage matters. There is mention of a “heritage team”, but how would it work? The term “conservation officer” is not mentioned in the document, but surely this role needs to be given more prominence, and perhaps power. BPC feel, rightly or wrongly, that there may have been an increasing reluctance for conservation officer(s) to get out and about in the borough, which is in marked contrast to a decade or so ago when the conservation officer was a familiar figure in the village. The present conservation officer(s) are no doubt extremely busy, but – going forward with this drive to emphasize heritage, it would be good to make the role a more outgoing one again.
3. The document mentions, p.53, that the Swale Heritage at Risk Register should be freely available to view from 2020. This kind of transparency is very important. It should be emphasized and propagated throughout the process, and go hand in hand with increased accessibility to the concerned public of all areas of the heritage conservation process.

Yours faithfully,

Mrs Teresa Hudson  
Clerk - Bredgar Parish Council