

Conservation Areas

DEVELOPMENT
SERVICES
DEPARTMENT

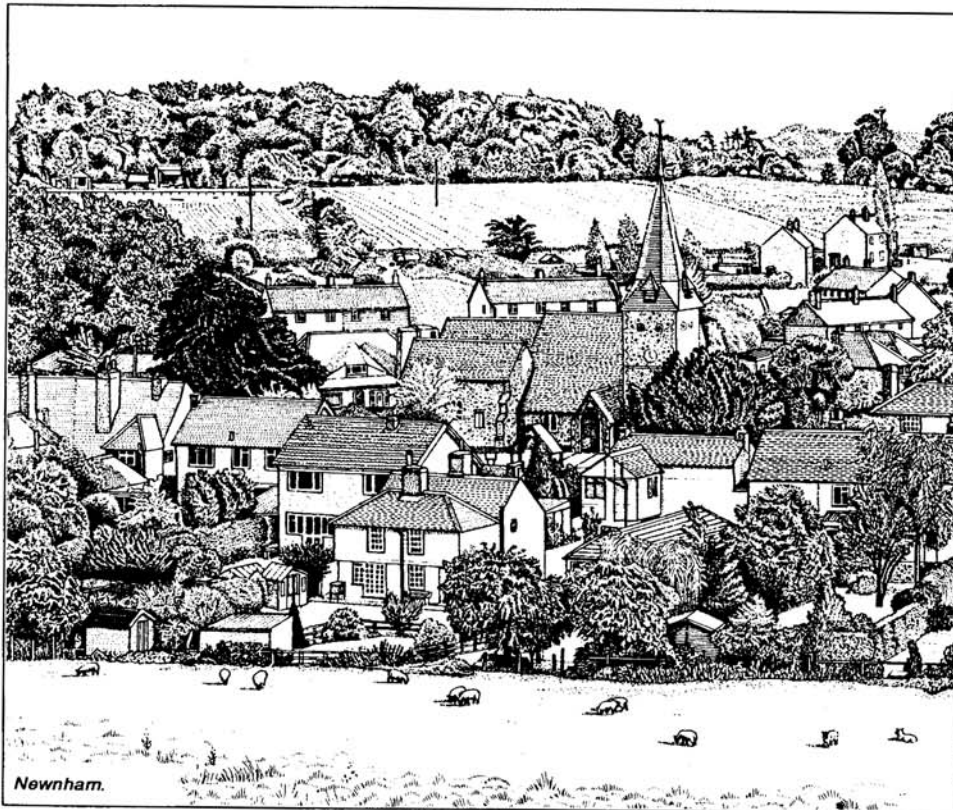


PLANNING AND
DEVELOPMENT
GUIDELINES No.8

Introduction

1.0 The Borough of Swale contains a wealth of historic buildings and attractive areas. The character and form of some of these areas have retained much of their original charm and quality. Many areas of particularly high quality have been designated as conservation areas, where the primary purpose of the Council's planning policy is to protect and enhance these essential characteristics.

1.1 This Planning Guidance describes the purpose of conservation area designation and particularly the implications for those who may already be living there and for persons purchasing a property or considering development or alterations to buildings and features in a conservation area.



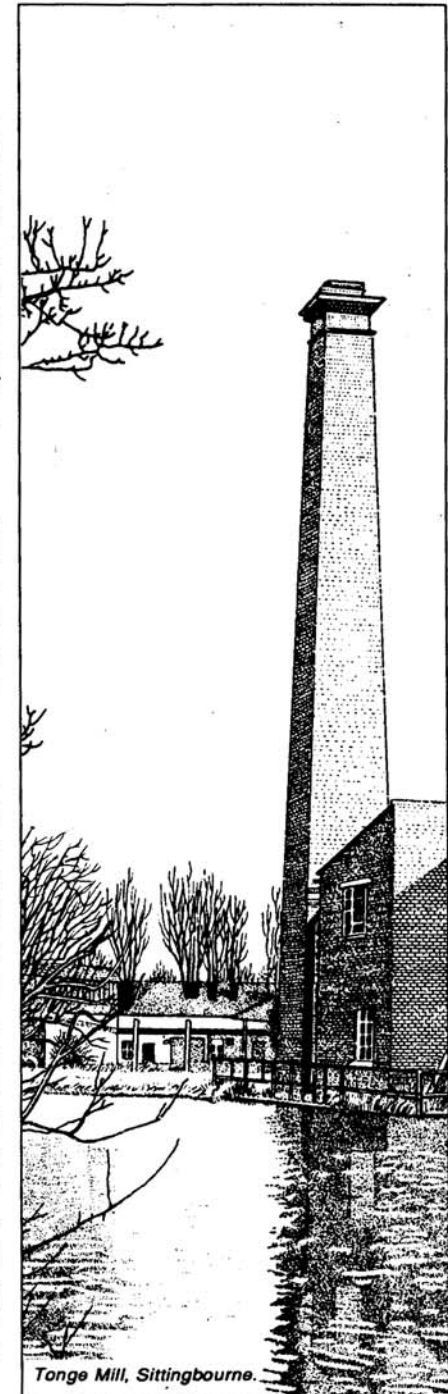
Newnham.

What are conservation areas?

2.0 Conservation areas are important to the environmental quality of life in this country. The power to designate them was first introduced by the *Civic Amenities Act 1967* and these powers have now been consolidated and included within the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990*. Current Department of the Environment advice is set out in *Circular 8/87* entitled "*Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas - Policy and Procedures*".

2.1 The statutory definition of 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 which has been designated by the Local Planning Authority under the provision of the above Acts).

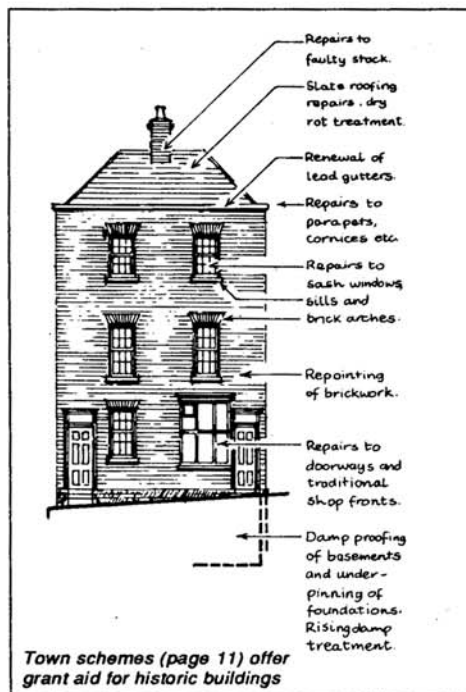
2.2 There is no standard specification for conservation areas and they will naturally be of many kinds. They may be large or small, from whole town centres to squares, terraces and smaller groups of buildings. They will often be centred on historic buildings, but not always. Pleasant groups of other buildings, open spaces, trees, historic street patterns, a village green or features of historic or archaeological interest may also contribute to the special character of an area. Sometimes historic parks and gardens will be important elements in conservation areas. Areas appropriate for designation will be found in almost every town and many villages. It is the character of areas, rather than individual buildings, that the relevant Acts seek to preserve.



Tonge Mill, Sittingbourne.

Conservation areas in Swale

3.0 The history and contrasting landscape of the Borough has meant that there is a large variety of village and town settlements - from downland and estuarine villages to the three contrasting centres of Sittingbourne, Sheerness and Faversham. As at April 1993 the Borough of Swale contained 42 conservation areas, containing many of the Borough's listed buildings (these are buildings listed by the Department of the National Heritage as being of architectural or historic importance). The Council is committed to a programme of reviewing the conservation areas with a view to designating new ones and amending the boundaries of existing ones, where appropriate. In time, it will be the intention of the Council to prepare a series of short leaflets on each of these areas, outlining their qualities, features of interest and the Council's aims and objectives for the area. The Council's Local Plan contains policies for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas and for the control of development within such areas. Schemes for environmental improvements have been carried out in Faversham and Queenborough, with further schemes planned for Sittingbourne and Milton Regis.



How do you know if a property is within a conservation area?

4.0 The Council holds plans which show the designated conservation areas. When purchasing a property within a conservation area this fact should appear on the land charge reply to your solicitor's "search" enquiries.

Living in a conservation area - What does it mean for residents?

5.0 To live in a conservation area does not mean that you are in a museum where new developments cannot take place or improvements be carried out to your property. The additional planning controls that apply in conservation areas are relatively few and many residents feel the potential drawbacks to be far outweighed by the public recognition that they live in a place of some special character where

there is a duty placed on the Council to preserve and enhance that character. Conservation area status gives additional planning protection from unsympathetic development or alterations which could otherwise spoil the special character of that area and possibly reduce the market value of properties.

The main effects of designation

- The demolition of all buildings (with a few minor exceptions) or any part of such buildings requires Conservation Area Consent from the Borough Council or in some cases the Department of Environment.
- Planning permission is required to change the exterior of buildings with either stone, artificial stone, timber, plastic or tile cladding.
- The range of "permitted development rights" (which allow certain alterations and extensions to properties and certain other minor forms of development to take place without the need for planning permission) is more limited within conservation areas. Permission is required for dormer windows and there are tighter controls over extensions, satellite dishes and outbuildings within gardens.
- Owners are required to give at least 6 weeks notice in writing to the Council of any intention to fell or lop trees growing within the designated area.
- If the Council considers that any proposed development requiring planning permission would affect the character or appearance of the conservation area, it has a duty to advertise the application and take into account any representations received.
- Any new development should preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area.

Planning legislation is complex and the Government quite frequently introduces detailed changes. You are therefore strongly advised to contact the Council before carrying out alterations or other development relating to your property (see 'Contacts').

5.1 You should also note that the Council will sometimes have removed some or all of the general permissions ("permitted development rights") by means of an Article 4 Direction or condition attached to a planning permission. You will probably know if your property is affected by such a direction. You will have either been notified or if you have recently moved to your property it will have been shown on your "search". Please check with the Council if you are not sure.

Planning policies on development in conservation areas

A. Demolition

6.0 "Conservation Area Consent" is required to demolish any building with a volume of more than 115 cubic metres - or any part of such a building. There are some exceptions and the advice of the Council's Conservation Officer should be sought.

6.1 Conservation Area Consent may also be needed to demolish gates, walls, fences, or railings if they are above a certain height. Again, you should contact the Council's Conservation Officer.

6.2 Where an existing building is of architectural or historic interest (even if it is not a "listed building") and/or makes a positive contribution to the attractiveness and character of the conservation area, the Council will normally oppose its demolition.

6.3 In other cases where consent to demolish a building is applied for with a view to a redevelopment of the site, Conservation Area Consent will normally only be granted when a detailed scheme for redevelopment has already been approved. Planning conditions or legal agreements may be sought to ensure that alteration or demolition does not take place without redevelopment.

6.4 Replacement development must preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area.

B. New Development

6.5 Any new development should preserve or enhance the special character or appearance of a conservation area, whilst allowing the area to remain alive and prosperous. It will be important to see that every new building is designed not as a separate entity, but as part of a larger whole which has a well established character of its own. **A high standard of development therefore will be required for all buildings in conservation areas and for extensions to existing buildings.**



6.6 Normally the consideration of proposals will require fully detailed planning applications. Details necessary to assess the suitability of proposals for new development must include site layout, elevations, design and landscaping. Often it will be necessary to consider drawings and perspectives which show the relationship of any new development to its wider surroundings.

6.7 Open spaces, gardens and gaps between existing buildings are often important elements of the streetscene and the overall character of a

conservation area. Development that results in the loss or erosion of such spaces will not be permitted if it would be harmful to the character and appearance of a conservation area.

6.8 Subject to general planning policies contained within the Kent Structure Plan, Swale Borough Local Plan, together with other normal development control criteria, the Council will only permit development within or adjacent to conservation areas where:

- (1) the character or appearance of the area is preserved or enhanced;**
- (2) a high standard of design is achieved;**
- (3) the scale, mass and form are compatible with adjacent buildings and their setting;**
- (4) appropriate materials are used; and**
- (5) suitable landscaping is provided to a high standard.**

C. Alterations

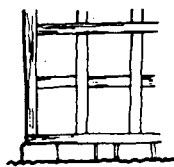
6.9 The quality and interest of a conservation area is made up from the sum of all its parts. Modest buildings such as terraced houses and cottages can contribute to the character of the area. It follows that alterations to these buildings can therefore have a considerable impact upon the appearance and quality of the conservation area. Repairs carried out in like materials using traditional methods have little or no effect but quite small changes, such as the replacement of timber sash windows with plastic or metal framed windows, can not only downgrade the appearance of the building and the conservation area, but can also actually devalue the property itself. The Council, therefore, asks property owners within conservation areas to think carefully before altering their buildings or undertaking repairs. Advice is available from the Council's Conservation Officer and sometimes grant aid can be offered toward the cost of repairing non-listed buildings in a traditional and sympathetic way. Doing things the right way will be vital to help maintain the attractiveness of an area. It can then continue to be appreciated by residents and visitors alike.

6.10 Some alterations to non-listed property in a conservation area do not normally require planning permission (although in many instances Building Regulation Approval will be required, see also DEMOLITION). However some of these alterations, such as the installation of replacement windows, the removal of internal features like fireplaces, original panelled doors and coving can have a detrimental effect, not only to the buildings themselves but sometimes on the conservation area as a whole. The Council's Conservation Officer will be pleased to give advice on the appropriateness of any proposed alteration.

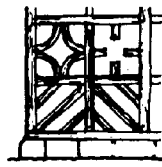
Some examples of exterior detailing that might be found in conservation areas.



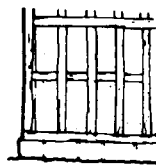
a. Tall narrow panels



b. Square panels



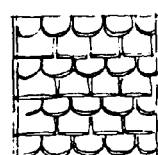
c. Decorative panels



d. Midrail dividing panels



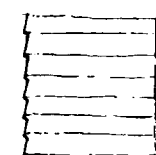
e. Kentish framing



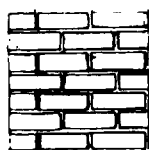
f. Timber tile-hung



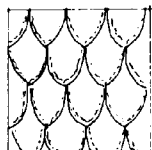
g. Timber plastered



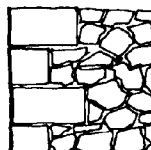
h. Weather-boarding



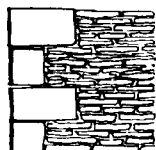
i. Mathematical tiling



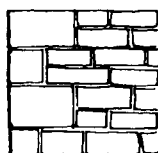
j. Slate hanging



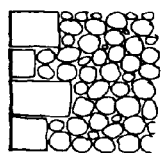
k. Irregular stone



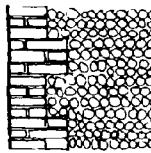
l. Striated stone



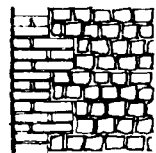
m. Squared stone



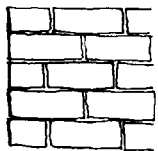
n. Cobbled wall



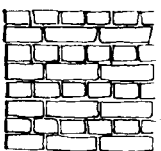
o. Pebbled wall



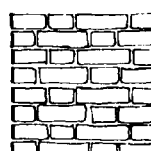
p. Knapped flint



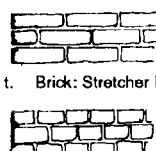
q. Clay lump



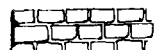
r. Brick: English bond



s. Brick: Flemish bond



t. Brick: Stretcher bond



u. Brick: Header bond

6.11 The Council has also prepared Supplementary Planning Guidance relating to listed buildings - *"Listed Buildings - A Guide for Owners and Occupiers"* (Planning and Development Guidelines No.2). If your property is a listed building, special planning controls apply and you are strongly advised to read the leaflet and seek the advice of the Council's Conservation Officer. It also provides general guidance on the repair and restoration of older buildings and much is equally relevant to non-listed buildings within conservation areas. The following are general guidelines:-

(i) Materials

6.12 Any alterations or repairs to external elevations should respect the existing materials and match them in texture and colour. Every effort should be made to re-use facing brickwork, flintwork, tile hanging, weatherboarding and mathematical tiles. The resurfacing of these materials with render or paints should always be avoided. When repointing brickwork, strong cement mortars and weather struck joints should not be used.

(ii) Windows

6.13 Existing openings should not be widened or heightened out of proportion to an elevation. Modern window casements with top opening or louvred lights are usually unsuitable in older buildings. In general, the original proportion and style of window should be repeated and sound, older windows should whenever possible be retained and repaired.

(iii) External Features

6.14 Original features such as chimney stacks, cornices, architraves, date plaques, balconies and verandahs should be retained. Traditional roofing materials such as thatch, clay tiles or slate should never be replaced by concrete tiles or other modern materials.

(iv) Internal Features

6.15 Although unseen from the outside, the removal of features like fireplaces, internal beams, coving and internal doors can have a devastating effect on a building. These should be retained wherever possible.

(v) Colour

6.16 The use of suitable colours can be very important to an historic street scene. The Council's Conservation Officer can offer advice on this subject.

(vi) Shopfronts

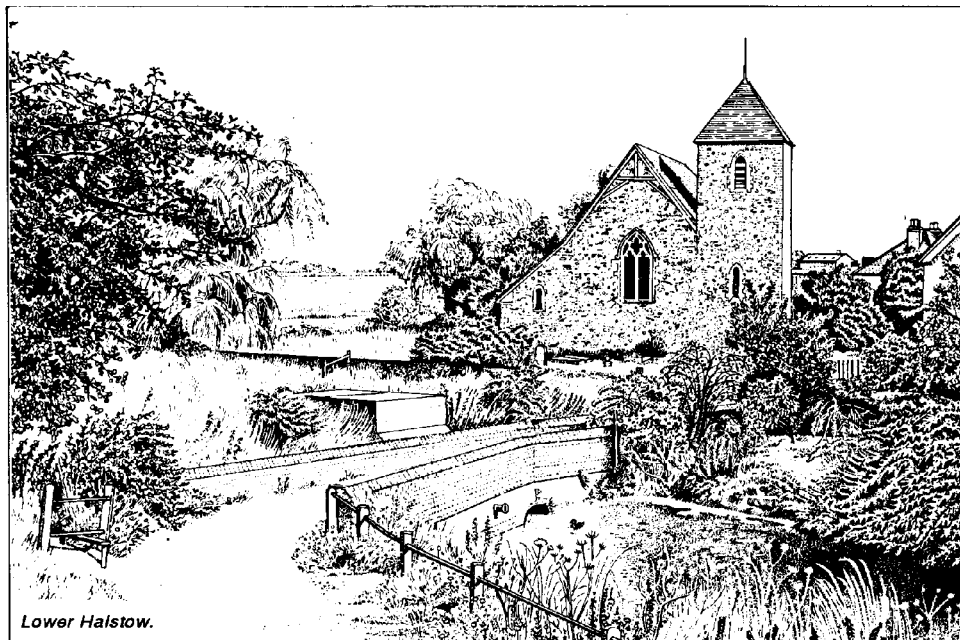
6.17 Wherever old shopfronts of merit survive, they should be retained. The Borough Council has produced further guidance on the subject entitled *"The Design of Shopfronts, Signs and Advertisements"* (Planning and Development Guidelines No.4).

(vii) Other Features

6.18 Outbuildings, walls, railings, fences, paving and hedges all contribute to the interest of a conservation area and should be retained.

D. Setting of a Conservation Area

7.0 The character of some conservation areas is enhanced by the landscape around them, within them and views to and from the area. In considering development proposals, strong regard will be given to the need to safeguard this setting.



E. Trees in Conservation Areas

8.0 Trees in conservation areas are important features adding to the character of the area. Proposals to fell, lop, top or uproot a tree, not already covered by a Tree Preservation Order, require that six weeks notice in writing is given to the Council. If you cut down, uproot or wilfully destroy a tree, or wilfully damage, top, or lop a tree in a manner likely to destroy it, you could be fined up to £20,000 on summary conviction, or on indictment be liable to an unlimited fine.

F. Satellite Dishes

9.0 The unsympathetic siting of satellite dishes and T.V. aerials within conservation areas can have a major impact upon the character of the area. Planning permission is sometimes required. For satellite dishes, advice is given in the Department of the Environment's leaflet "A Householder's Planning Guide for the Installation of Satellite Television Dishes" (available from the Planning Section

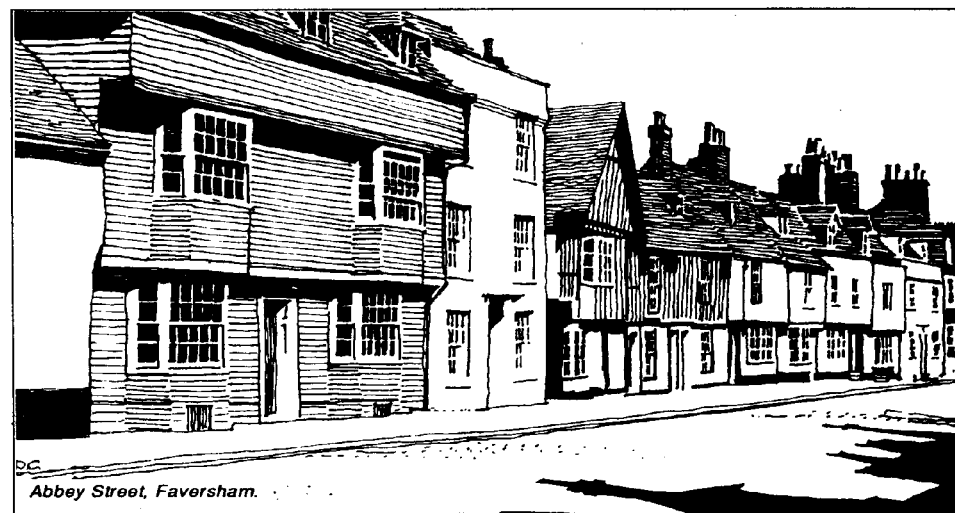
of the Development Services Department of the Council). If you live in a listed building then "Listed Building Consent" will be required.

9.1 If you wish to install a satellite dish, you should consider the following:

- 1 *planning permission will not normally be granted for a dish which would be detrimental to the character of a listed building or conservation area.*
- 2 *the colour of the dish is important, a white dish against a dark background may be conspicuous, whilst a mesh or transparent dish may be less obtrusive than a solid one.*
- 3 *in most cases a dish need be no bigger than 70cm in diameter.*
- 4 *the location of a dish on the rear wall of a building, or in the garden screened by shrubs is usually less conspicuous than on the front of the building.*
- 5 *the height above ground level of the dish: Its performance is not affected whether it is located higher up or lower down on a building, as long as the line-of-sight with the satellite is not affected. A dish hidden behind a parapet or chimney stack may be less conspicuous.*

9.2 For the siting of television aerials much of this criteria will also apply.

9.3 Please discuss the issue of siting aerials/dishes with the Area Planning Officer (see Contacts) prior to installation.



Grants and Loans

10.0 In certain circumstances grants are available both from Central Government and Local Government towards the cost of eligible repairs. They are always at the discretion of the body giving them and mostly apply to historic and architecturally important buildings (listed buildings). Further details are given in the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance entitled *"Listed Buildings - A Guide for Owners and Occupiers"* (Planning and Development Guidelines No.2).

10.1 The Borough Council allocates funds jointly with the Department of National Heritage and Kent County Council toward "Town Schemes" currently at Faversham, Sheerness/Queenborough and Milton Regis. The owners of selected buildings in these areas can apply for grant assistance towards the cost of eligible works.



10.2 Advice on all aspects of grant aid can be sought from the Council's Conservation Officer.

10.3 You may also be eligible for a grant under the Housing Acts for bringing a dwelling up to a habitable standard. Details are available from Swale Borough Council's Environmental Services Department.

Conclusion

11.0 Both the Council and those living and working within conservation areas have a mutual interest in maintaining and enhancing the special character of conservation areas. For residents and businesses, the maintenance of the qualities of the conservation area will ensure that the area remains thriving, providing an attractive area for residents and visitors alike. For everyone it means that the very best of the Borough's built environment remains for future generations to enjoy.

For further planning advice please contact:

Planning Services, Swale house, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT; (advice is also available on the planning pages of website at www.swale.gov.uk)

Email us on planning@swale.gov.uk or Fax us on 01795 417417

The Duty officer is: available:

8.45 to 5.00pm Monday to Thursday and 8.45 am to 4.30 pm on Friday.

Contactable either in person at Swale House or by telephoning **01795 417442** and can

- Give advice on procedures and processes
- Answer general questions and Comment on development potential
- Give general advice on who to contact and how best to seek pre-application advice.

Swale's Conservation Officer - telephone 01795 417375

For Building Regulation advice please contact:

South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership,
Compass Centre, Chatham Maritime, Chatham, Kent, ME4 4YH

Telephone 01634 331133

Fax 01634 331299

Email building@stgbc.org.uk

If you would like further information, more copies or alternative versions (i.e large print, audio, different language) we will do our best to accommodate your request please contact:

Customer Services

Phone: **01795 417850**

Email: csc@swale.gov.uk

This booklet is one of a number of planning and development guidelines published by the Development Services Department of Swale Borough Council. Others include:

1. *The Conversion of Buildings into Flats and Houses in Multiple Occupation.*
2. *Listed Buildings - A Guide for Owners and Occupiers.*
3. *The Conservation of Traditional Farm Buildings.*
4. *The Design of Shopfronts, Signs and Advertisements.*
5. *Designing an Extension - A Guide for Householders.*
6. *Planting on New Developments - A Guide for Developers.*
7. *The Erection of Stables and Keeping of Horses.*
8. ● *Conservation Areas.*

Others may be published from time to time. Should you wish to obtain any of the above then please contact:

Swale Borough Council. Development Services Department,
Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne,
Kent. ME10 3HT. ☎ (0795) 417344.