

RECULVER Conservation Area Appraisal



Canterbury City Council

27 April 2010

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1. Introduction

This appraisal examines the key elements that contribute to the special architectural and historic character of Reculver. The character of any area is determined by its topography, landscape location and buildings, the combination of these factors creates a special, 'sense of place' that the conservation area aims to preserve and enhance.

Conservation areas were first introduced in 1967 and are currently defined as 'areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance' (Section 69 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990). Conservation areas are diverse in size and character, and it is the quality and interest of the area that is of importance, rather than just the individual buildings within it. Such designation gives the authority greater control over demolition, minor development, works to trees and advertisements, however, it also brings certain responsibilities. Under the terms of the 1990 Act, local authorities have a duty to review the extent of designation from time to time, to designate further areas if appropriate, to bring forward proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas and to pay special attention to the character or appearance of conservation areas in exercising their planning powers.

The Reculver Conservation Area in Herne Bay was designated in December 1997 to protect the areas rich historic and cultural heritage, predominately the Reculver Towers and Roman fort, a Scheduled Ancient Monument that dominates the local landscape and provides a highly visible landmark for miles around.

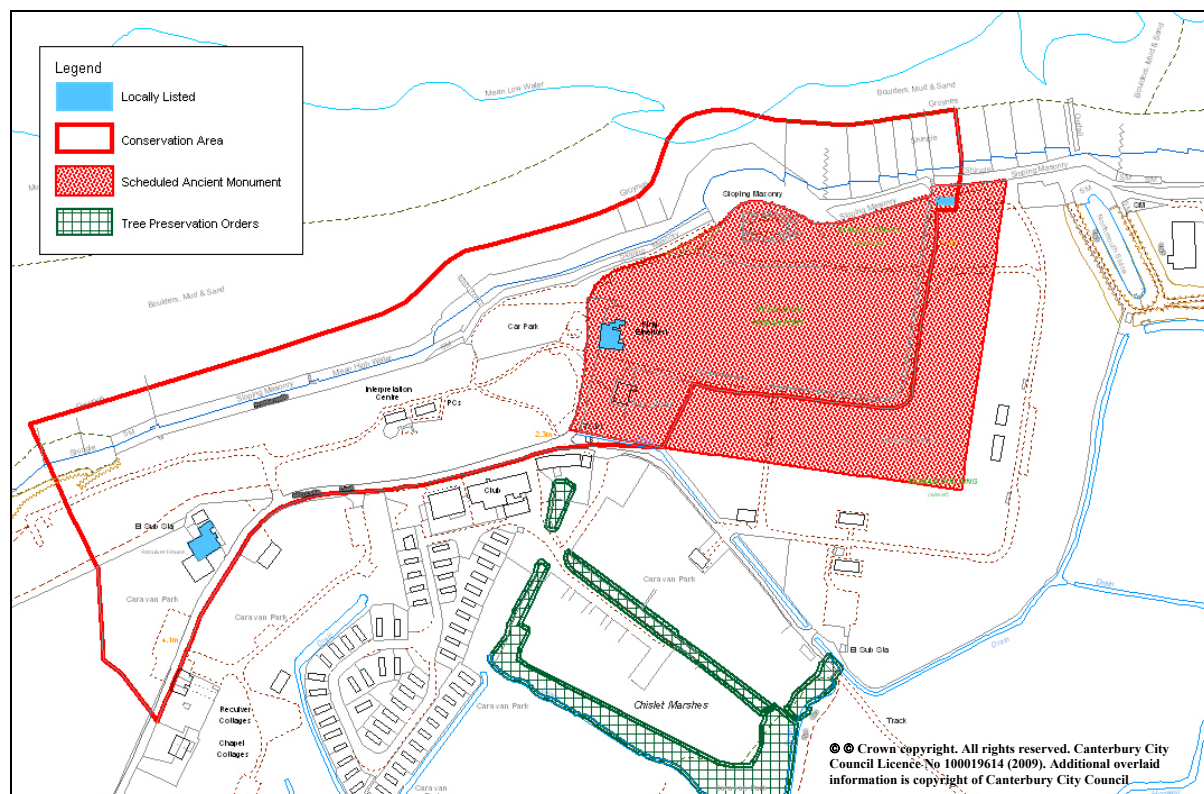


Figure 1. Reculver Conservation Area

1.1 The purpose and status of this appraisal

The principal purpose of this appraisal is to provide a firm basis upon which proposals for development within the Reculver conservation area can be assessed, by defining those elements that contribute to the special natural, historic and architectural character. It supplements and provides clarity to policies contained in the Local Plan/Local Development Framework, primarily those relating to design demolition and development within

conservation areas. It will be key to maintaining character and promoting appropriate, sensitive proposals in the conservation area. This document will have the status of a background paper to the City Council's Local Development Framework.

Other purposes include undertaking a review of the boundary in accordance with section 69(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which requires local planning authorities – *“from time to time to determine whether any further parts of the area should be designated.”* The appraisal also highlights particular issues and some of the elements that detract from the appearance or character of the conservation area. These provide the basis for potential future actions for improvement.

1.2 Key Characteristics

This appraisal concludes that the most significant features of the Reculver conservation area are:

- The Reculver Towers, which dominate the local landscape and provide a highly visible landmark for miles around.
- The remnants of the Roman Fort, which date back to between AD 185-200/210.
- It's rich historic and cultural heritage.
- The open, largely undeveloped landscape both in and around the Conservation Area resulting in a welcome sense of isolation and heightening the impact of the Towers and Fort.
- The 180° views along the coastline and out to sea from the Towers.
- The views of the Towers from both western and eastern approaches.
- The Reculver Visitor Centre, whose design compliments the surrounding landscape and buildings.



1.3 Planning Policy Framework

National Policy Guidance

Government advice on the control of conservation areas and historic buildings is set out in Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 – Planning and the Historic Environment. Planning Policy Guidance Notes 15 & 16, the South East Plan, Regional Spatial Strategy, and the Kent Design Guide provide the general strategic policy context under which the policies in the local plan function.

Regional and County Guidance

The Secretary of State published the South East Plan (regional Spatial Strategy) on 6 May 2009. The plan places importance on the protection of the historic environment and acknowledges the role that the historic environment plays in contributing towards sustainable development, regeneration, tourism and social inclusion. Policy BE6 requires local authorities to adopt policies and proposals, which support conservation and enhancement of the historic environment. Policy BE1: Management for an urban renaissance, is also relevant and states, inter alia, *‘promote and support design solutions relevant to context and which build upon local character and distinctiveness and sense of place, including the sensitive reuse of redundant or under-used historic buildings’*.

The Kent Design Guide provides a starting point for good design that is well considered and contextually sympathetic amongst other things. It emphasises the need for the layout and appearance of new development to be based on an appraisal of the existing character.

Canterbury City Council Local Plan

The primary means by which the City Council ensures the preservation and enhancement of the conservation area is through the development control process and by applying the policies of the Canterbury District Local Plan (2001 – 2011). The Local Plan, adopted in July 2006, sets out the spatial strategy for the Canterbury District. It includes policies on housing, the economy, town centres, the natural and built environment, community infrastructure and many others. A number of designations are particularly relevant to Reculver, including those relating to conservation areas and open space. Paragraphs 6.83-6.93 of the Local Plan deal with conservation areas and include policies BE7, BE8, BE9 and NE5. Policy BE7 provides the primary guidance to developers about conservation areas.

The Local Development Framework (LDF) will supersede the Local Plan in 2012. The LDF Core Strategy Options Report was published in January 2010 and was subject to public consultation until March 2010. The Core Strategy when adopted will provide the overall spatial strategy for the district until 2026. The Local Plan remains an important part of the planning framework for the district. Most of its policies were saved by the Secretary of State in 2009 and continue to be relevant in determining planning applications. The LDF consists of a collection of Local Development Documents, including the Core Strategy, Proposals Maps, Area Action Plans, and other development plan documents, which may deal with conservation issues as well as Supplementary Planning Documents.

Heritage, Archaeology and Conservation Supplementary Planning Document

The Heritage, Archaeology and Conservation Supplementary Planning Document was approved in October 2007. Chapter 4 explains the features that make up a general conservation and are Chapter 5 provides detailed guidance for developments in Conservation Areas.

Reculver Master Plan 2009

A Masterplan for the Country Park has been adopted as part of the Local Development Framework and will act to provide cohesion and guidance for the projects planned to enhance the area. Its aim is to provide a clear, realistic and flexible framework for implementing positive changes to the physical environment as well as the perception and management of the Reculver area. It will encourage a cohesive and coordinated approach for a number of individual projects, whose completion will see the area dramatically enhanced.

2. Location and Setting

Reculver is situated on the coast, approximately 2 kilometres west of Beltinge and five kilometres to the east of Birchington. The focal point of the Conservation Area is the Reculver Towers, a highly recognisable landscape feature visible from many miles around. The area as a whole has retained a strong sense of seclusion due to its isolated location and lack of formal development combined with its setting of open, undeveloped, largely agricultural land and wide vistas out to the sea. Importantly, the majority of the Conservation Area is also located within the boundary of Reculver Country Park, an area valued for its high ecological and amenity value. The importance of the area for wildlife is reflected in its being designation as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), a Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site.

The lack of residential housing within the conservation area explains the very low number of permanent residents (135, 2001 Census) although the extensive caravan parks surrounding the Conservation Area means that a much higher population is usually present, albeit in a transient manner. The local businesses (including the caravan park) account for the majority of the permanent population.

2.1 Topography

The Reculver Towers are located on a knoll of locally higher ground approximately ten metres above mean sea level; to the west of the Towers, the land drops rapidly to approximately five. It remains at this level as far as the Blue Dolphin Caravan Park where the land gradually increases in height, continuing to do so once outside of the Conservation Area to a height of twenty-five.

The soil type within the Conservation Area is classified as freely draining slightly acid loamy, whilst immediately outside of it, loamy and clayey soils with a high level of groundwater are present; this dictates the need for the creation of a dense network of drainage channels that feature heavily in the surrounding agricultural landscape.

The inherent instability of the clay and soft sand rocks that make up the cliffs has resulted in dramatic rates of subsidence occurring. Records state that in Roman times the sea was some one and a half miles further out yet by 1540 the fort stood within quarter of a mile of the coastline. The effects of continued subsidence and erosion means the Towers now form part of the coastline. The implications of this rapid retreat on the vulnerable Reculver Towers explain the presence of the heavy defences constructed to protect the remainder of this Scheduled Ancient Monument.

The continued erosion of the unprotected coastline from Reculver westward to Bishopstone Glen provides substantial geological interest to Reculver Country Park exposing sections of Thanet Formation, the Woolwich and Reading Formation and the Oldhaven Sands of the Harwich Formation and fossils emerge.

2.2 Biodiversity Assessment

An area running along the coastline to the north of the Conservation Area offers the most interest in terms of biodiversity; this is recognised in its designation as a SSSI, an SPA and a Ramsar Site. The SSSI extends uninterrupted from Swalecliffe to Ramsgate and is noted in part for its ornithological interest, as large numbers of waders and wildfowl use the area in winter and many species of birds feed and rest here during the spring and autumn migrations. Species of note include:

- turnstones, which overwinter regularly in numbers of international importance,
- whilst sanderlings, ringed plovers and grey plovers are present in nationally important numbers; turnstones,
- ringed plovers and grey plovers are all currently on the amber list of birds of conservation concern.

The small area of undisturbed shingle situated behind the sea wall and to the north of the Visitor Centre supports an interesting assemblage of plants typically associated with this habitat type. Vegetated shingle is classified as a UK and Kent Priority Biodiversity Action Plan Habitat and this area is known to support the BAP priority species *Colletes halophilus*, also known as the salt-marsh mining bee.

Threats to & opportunities for biodiversity enhancement

Whilst there are few ways in which to enhance the Conservation Area for biodiversity, efforts should be made to retain its current value and to improve the species-richness of the cliff-top grassland and any landscaping plantings.

2.3 Landscape setting and connections (including views and vistas)

Due to its undeveloped nature, the surrounding landscape is inextricably linked to the Conservation Area. Reculver Country Park, commences approximately two kilometres to the west, encompasses virtually all of the conservation area, whilst both the SSSI and SPA extend along the coast towards the north of the conservation area. Beyond the caravan

parcs, the landscape is comprised of low lying and open agricultural land. It was previously an area of marshland but a network of drainage channels has been created to enable viable farming of the land. Whilst serving a practical purpose, these channels are also a significant visual feature in such an open and uncluttered landscape.

Reculver Lane is the only road within the Conservation Area, connecting into Sweechbridge and Reculver Road 1.5 kilometres to the west. The lane runs along the southern boundary of the conservation area before veering off in a northerly direction terminating at the car park and King Ethelbert Public House. The location of the road interrupts the linear flow of the Conservation Area and is an unwelcome intrusion of noise and disruption along the coastal edge.

Views into and out of the Conservation Area are one of its key characteristics (see figure 2) with the Reculver Towers providing a prominent and readily identifiable landmark from many miles. The higher ground of the Scheduled Ancient Monument provides the finest views of the surrounding land and seascape. Views to the south from this vantage are partially obscured by the surrounding caravan park and associated vegetation and blocked altogether in areas of lower ground at the centre of the Conservation Area.

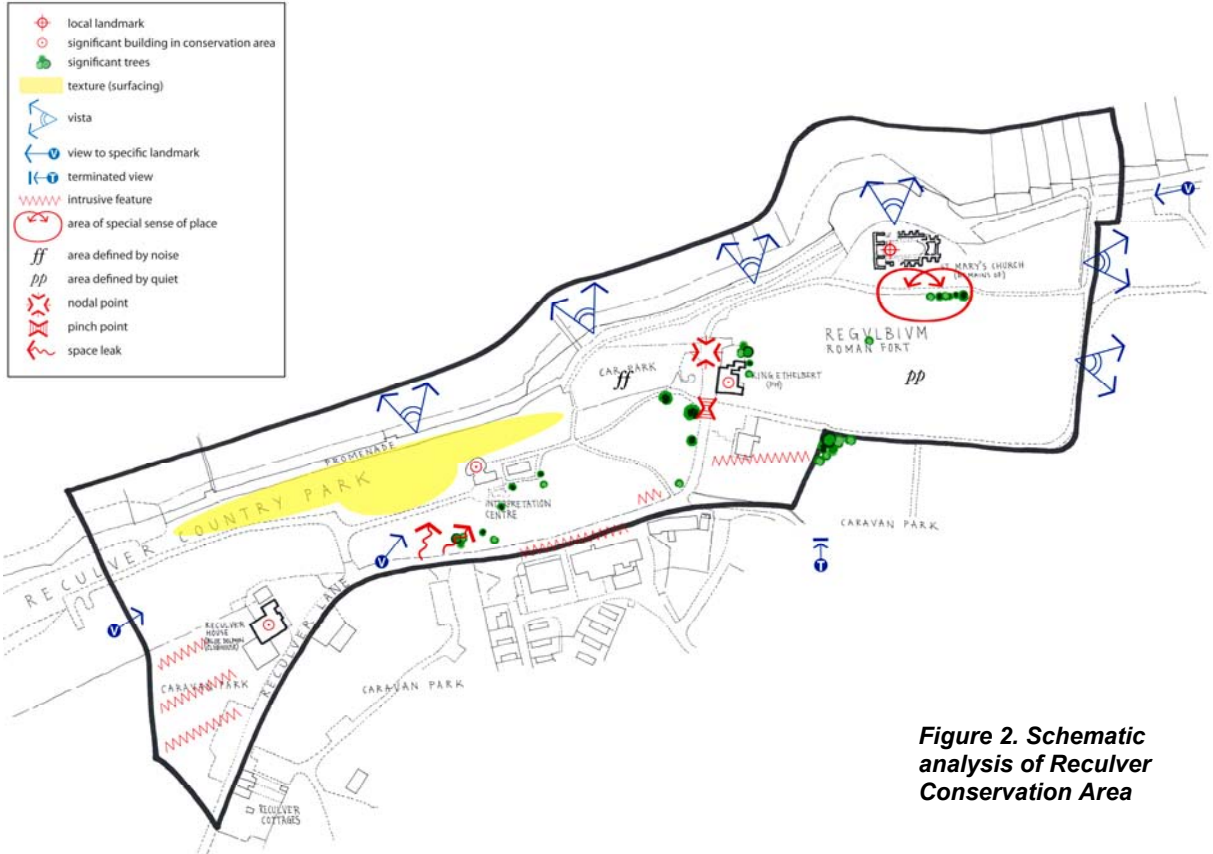


Figure 2. Schematic analysis of Reculver Conservation Area

3. Archaeology and Historic Development.

3.1 Archaeology/Evolution

The earliest evidence of settlement in the area consists of a series of variously aligned ditches and a number of pits dating from the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age periods (circa 550-650 B/C). At this time the coastline was probably a considerable distance further north, and the late prehistoric settlement would have been sited at a point that looked east across the wide tidal estuary of what became the Wantsum Channel.

This location, on the eastern margins of a headland surrounded on three sides by water, was not one that would have been ignored in the years following the Roman invasion of Britain in A/D 43 and excavations have revealed the alignments of a large double-ditched defensive earthwork, of mid to late 1st century date, of uncertain layout but sited straddling an area of high ground and probably military in origin. How long this site remained occupied is unclear. It probably formed only part of a complex pattern of fortification and settlement that extended across a considerable part of the headland. Evidence in the form of pits and wells indicates settlement to the west during the second century and it is likely that a more substantial settlement also lay to the north in an area now lost to sea erosion.

The stone built fort visible today was not erected until sometime between A/D 185-200/210. In this period the fort walls, gatehouses and rampart bank, enclosing an area of 3.1 hectares (7.5 acres), as well as the headquarters building (*principia*) were completed. An inscription recovered from the subterranean room beneath the shrine (*aedes*)¹ shows that this and the cross-hall (*basilica*), both located on the south side of the *principia*, were built by one *Rufinus*, consul, probably *Aulus Triarus Rufinus*, consul in A/D 210 and governor of Britannia between A/D 210-16. Other buildings, including barrack blocks and a bathhouse, were erected during the third century.



View of the south wall of the Roman Fort

The fort is first named in the *Notitia Dignitatum*, a document drawn up in the early fourth century listing units of the Roman army stationed in south-eastern Britain under the command of the *Comes Littoris Saxonicum*. Reculver is listed as *Regulbium* with the garrison given as the *cohortis primae Baetasiorum*² under the command of a tribune. Other evidence suggests this unit had, however, been moved to Reculver in the later second century and was responsible, along with squadrons of the *Classis Britannica*, for the construction of the fort.

¹ *Aedes* - The *aedes* contained the garrison's standard, or banner, along with an image of the deified emperor and served as a military chapel for worship of the *princeps* and the unit itself. The *aedes* also served as a treasury sometimes, as at Reculver, located in a strong room beneath the chapel.

² *cohortis primae Baetasiorum* - This was a five-hundred strong infantry unit recruited from the *Baetasii* tribe inhabiting the lands between the Rhine and the Meuse to the immediate west of *Novaesium* in *Germania Inferior* (Neuss, Westfalen, West Germany). It is possible that they formed the first century garrison at Manchester, and were moved to Old Kilpatrick at the western end of the Antonine Wall around AD139. A detachment of the unit apparently manned the small fort at Bar Hill in the central portion of the Wall during the Antonine period, and this may have been due to prior experience in the area gained during the Agricolan campaigns through Scotland. It is possible that a detachment of this unit were posted to assist the main Antonine garrison, *Cohors I Hamiorum Saggiatariorum*, a unit of archers from Syria. *Coh I Baetasiorum* were moved to Maryport during the late Antonine period, where the experience gained in the maritime environment on the Cumbrian coast was later to see the unit posted to the Saxon-Shore fort at Reculver in Kent.

By the late third century military activity at the fort was in decline. Two of the barrack blocks were derelict by A/D 300, the *principia* had been demolished and backfilled, and the east gate of the fort blocked by the early fourth century. The casual loss of coinage and discarding of broken pottery in refuse pits indicates some continuation of occupation within the fort until the later fourth century. There is evidence for one timber structure of possible late Roman date, but its function and indeed the scale and type of occupation within the fort in the fourth century is uncertain.

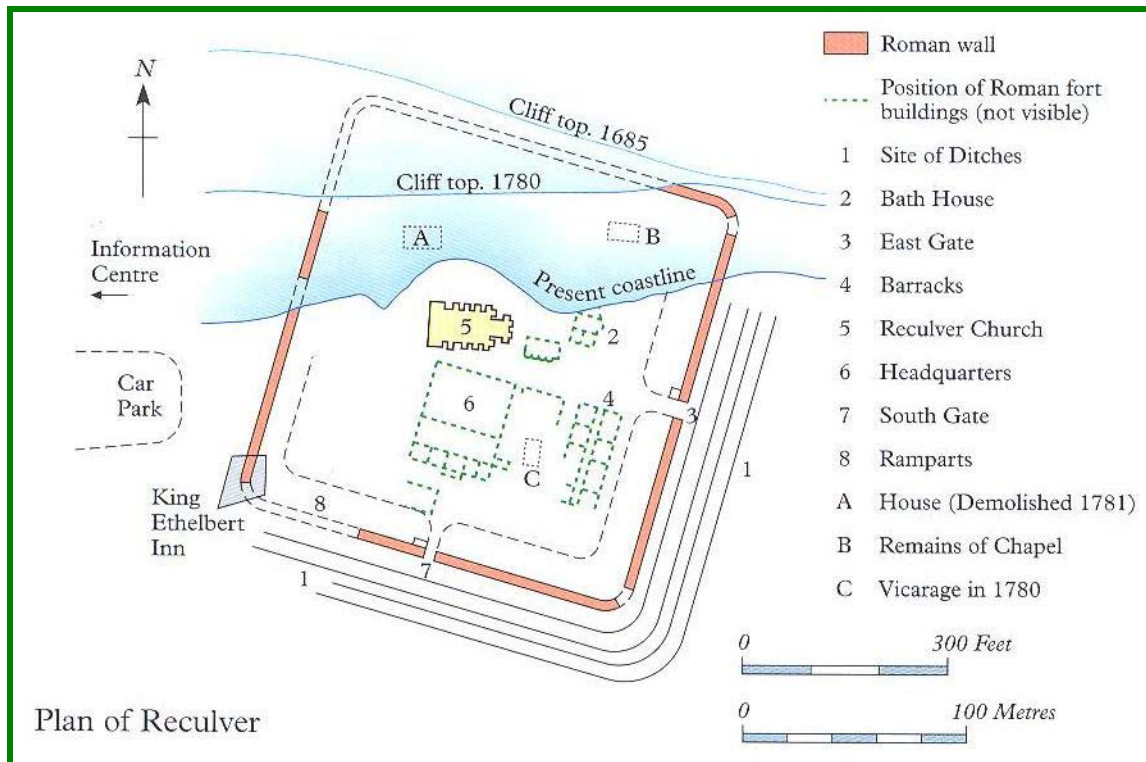


Figure 3. Plan of Reculver(illustration sourced from English Heritage guidebook)

The historical and archaeological record provides little evidence for activity at the fort in the 200 years following the collapse of Roman central administration and economy in Britain from mid fifth century. The place, however, must have remained significant and important as in 669 the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records that land at *Reculf* was granted to Bassa the mass priest by Egbert, King of Kent, for the foundation of a *monasterium* or minster. Founded on a royal estate, its original endowment was considerable, the minster serving a large territory or *parochia*. Through to the ninth century further grants and bequests of land extended the estate as far a field as Herne and St Nicholas at Wade. Monastic institutions at this time also acted as a focus of secular settlement and finds of significant numbers of late seventh and early eighth century silver pennies from these area suggest that it also functioned as a *wic* or port of trade from an early date. The church, dedicated to St Mary the Virgin, was erected in the later seventh century and consisted of a simple aisle-less nave and chancel with side rooms or *portici* which were extended southwards in the eight century. The wealth of the minster is evidenced by the twin columns of Marquise limestone (imported from Calais) that supported the chancel arch of the church, and an elaborate early ninth century carved stone cross. Most of the building material for the church would have been sourced from the ruined Roman structures. The monastic centre was probably sited within the confines of the fort but nothing is known of the other buildings or its layout.

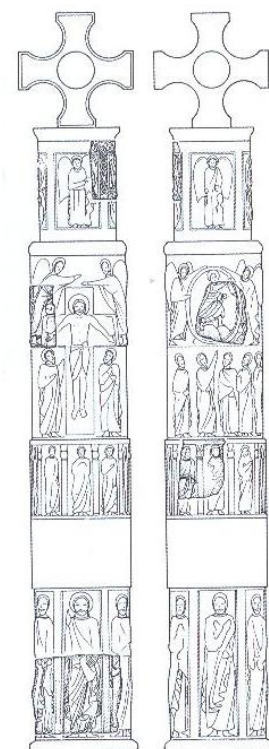


Figure 4. Artist's reconstruction of the Reculver Cross (illustration sourced from English Heritage guidebook)

The minster appears to have escaped significant damage during the course of Danish raids from the mid ninth century and in A.D. 949 the estate was granted to the Archbishop of Canterbury. The church thereafter functioned as a parish church, but the estate remained intact and its entry in Domesday Book demonstrates its status, being assessed as a Hundred in its own right.

In Raculf Hundred. The Archbishop holds Roculf. It answers for 8 sulungs. Land for 30 ploughs. In lordship 3 ploughs. 90 villagers with 25 smallholders have 27 ploughs. A church; a mill at 25d; meadow, 33 acres; woodland, 20 pigs; 5 salt-houses at 64d; a fishery. Total value of this manor before 1066 £14; when acquired, the same, now £35. In addition to these the Archbishop has £7 7s.

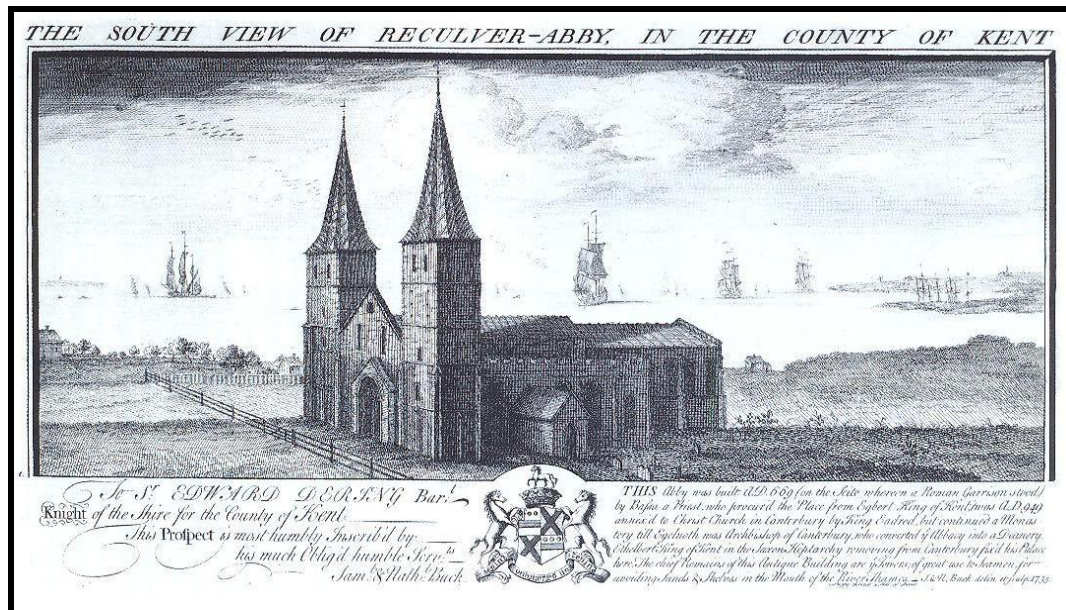


Figure 5. Engraving of Reculver church from the south by Samuel and Nathaniel Buck
(illustration sourced from English Heritage guidebook)

The church was altered in the twelfth century when twin towers were added at the west end, again built reusing Roman building materials, and the nave extended. Further alterations were made in the thirteenth century. As late as 1296 a 'great stone cross' is recorded standing near the chancel-arch. With the exception of the church, however, little is known of the form and layout of medieval settlement in the area. Archaeological investigations have recorded the presence of at least one building of probable medieval date within the fort, and the presence of numerous refuse pits attests to more substantial occupation. In the late eleventh century at least the settlement at Reculver was clearly important with a large population exploiting the full range of available resources, arable, meadow and woodland, as well as those on the foreshore with salt-panning, working a fishery and operating a mill.

In 1530 the sea cliffs and foreshore were a quarter of a mile north of the Roman fort. Farm plans of 1600, and in particular 1685, show the sea cliffs considerably closer but with the fort walls intact. The plan of 1685 also depicts ranges of buildings flanking the crossroads at the junction of the Canterbury Road and the coastal road to the west of the fort. Buildings were sited within the fort, including the vicarage, a chapel house dedicated to St James and nearby a hermitage. The layout of settlement depicted in 1685 probably also largely reflects the extent of the late medieval settlement.

By the late eighteenth century there had been considerable erosion of the sea cliffs, and the northwest corner of the fort had been lost. By 1802 Chapel House had fallen down and the remaining parishioners were persuaded to demolish the church in 1805 and erect a replacement at Hillborough. Subsequent erosion of the sea cliffs led to the loss of the coastal road and most of the buildings extant in 1685.

The motivating factor resulting in the designation of the Reculver Conservation Area is the presence of the Reculver Towers and the surrounding Roman Fort. Designation originally occurred in December 1997 with this document acting as the first review of the Conservation Area since then. Consequently, no amendments have been made or proposed until now.

3.2 Recent History

The twentieth century brought Reculver back into the limelight of British military history. During the Second World War the coast off Reculver was used for testing of the famous 'bouncing bomb' for the dam buster raids on Germany. The reason for this was that the sea was so shallow at this point of the coastline that objects could easily be recovered at low tide. Additionally, the towers on the coastline were similar to the towers of the Ruhr dams, which the pilots used to line themselves up on their bombing run.

After the war Reculver took on a new use with the advent of caravan holidays. The Council set up a large site on the cliff tops to the west of the Reculver Towers. In its heyday in the 1950's and 1960's up to 1000 caravans were accommodated. In 1953 there was a major flood in the area after a severe storm that breached the sea defences.

In 1952 an extensive archaeological excavation was started on the site of the Roman Fort and late Norman Towers and continued in stages over many decades. The coastguards cottages were demolished leaving an open setting for the ruined church. In 1984 the scheduled ancient monument came under the care of English Heritage. Canterbury City Council have also carried out substantial sea defense works in various forms to further protect what remains of the fort in an ongoing battle against coastal erosion.

The creation of Reculver Country Park in the early 1980's resulted in the removal of the caravans from the cliff edge and establishment of new sites inland. Since this time there has been a slow decline in the businesses associated with caravanning. However, other leisure activities have become established in the area related to birdwatching, cycling and walking as well as the educational importance through the visitor centre run by Kent Wildlife Trust.

4. Analysis of the Conservation Area

The character of a Conservation Area is defined by the historic form of development (plot layout, roads and boundaries); the relationship of buildings to spaces; the type and age of buildings; the contribution of landscape, trees and hedges, views and vistas. Segregation into more than one character area in this instance does not seem appropriate as the conservation area is one landscape unit based around the scheduled ancient monument.

The conservation area's linear open nature and topography means that the Reculver Towers dominate the landscape visually, providing a strong focal point, not only within it but also for many miles around. Their historical role as a strategic vantage point still resonates as a result of their elevated position above the surrounding countryside with 180° views along the coastline from Herne Bay to Birchington.

Within the conservation area, the presence of a concrete rendered wall (a remnant of a terrace of coastguard cottages) to the south of the Towers creates an unnecessary partition within a key area and detracts slightly from the impact of the Towers. The elevated position of the land surrounding the Towers (actually the Roman Fort scheduled ancient monument) means views are granted inland for some considerable distance, however, the adjacent caravan parks detracts from the views to the South. The tightly mown amenity grassland of the Roman Fort is rather uninspiring in terms of landscaping but the area still offers a rich example of our heritage although possibly overlooked and therefore undervalued due to the lack of interpretation material.



View looking southwest across the Roman Fort Scheduled Ancient Monument

Westward of the Towers is a central area of facilities and buildings aimed at visitors to the Country Park set in an area consisting of amenity grassland, vegetated shingle and hard landscaping. A variety of plants has partially colonised the shingle, which runs in a band to the north of the Visitor Centre and the natural aesthetic that it provides works well, contrasting to some of the unsympathetic landscaping elsewhere. The new Reculver Visitor Centre owned by Canterbury City Council is the central focus of this area whose considered design provides an unobtrusive yet striking feature that compliments the area.



Reculver Visitor Centre

King Ethelbert Pub

Reculver House

Treatment of the boundary around this small Conservation Area varies considerably. Upon entering from the western end along the cliffs, excellent views of almost the entire Conservation Area are afforded, partly a result of the elevated topography but also due its open nature and the length of the approach from this end. This greatly contrasts with the eastern and part of the southern boundary whereby the designation boundary commences only 4 metres away from the boundary of the Roman fort scheduled ancient monument. Running along this boundary is a wire fence, erected to prevent access into the adjacent caravan park, which restricts views to the point where it isn't possible to see the Towers above the ancient wall; the association with the Towers is therefore dissipated to an extent that the context of the surroundings is temporarily lost.

The northern boundary runs parallel to the coastline; approximately 25 metres offshore and uninterrupted views out to sea are available along its entire length. In contrast, the view from the southern boundary is generally enclosed by a series of caravan parks and associated buildings that front Reculver Lane. The buildings are rather plain and tatty with uninspiring hard landscaping fronting a number of them, giving the area an overriding sense of neglect. The presence of retaining sleeper walls and shrubby edges on the north side of Reculver Lane obscure views into open space and add to the feeling of enclosure generated by the presence of the caravan parks. A small section of the conservation area boundary situated on the Roman fort and the caravan park is currently inaccessible, once again detracting from the significance of this historically important area.



View showing Western boundary



View showing Eastern boundary

The contrast in views into the conservation area is marked, primarily due to topography. Land to the west is either higher than or at the same level whereas approaching it from the east along the sea wall, the Towers and the rest of the conservation area are higher in their elevation. This results in a slightly more imposing and dominant look to the Towers from the east as the knoll they're built on rises dramatically from the ground, whereas the western cliff top approach is gentler. The landscape types either side of the conservation area are markedly different although both allow views of the Towers from considerable distances, heightening its value as a highly recognisable landscape feature.

The caravan parks that encircle the southern boundary of the conservation area restrict views into the site and whilst they are not as imposing or formal as other types of development, their sprawling manner and proximity to the boundary results in a sense of enclosure, detracting from the spacious feel of the area and contrasting with the uninterrupted views available from all other aspects. Their presence along the entire boundary also inhibits access into the conservation area from a southern approach whereby it can only be reached along Public Right of Way CH59, which runs along a lane situated between two caravan parks.

The boundary to the east currently includes the burnt remains of a locally listed building, formerly one in a terrace of cottages that looked out to sea. The building is an eyesore and positioned directly adjacent to a key gateway into the conservation area. Although currently located just outside of the conservation area boundary, the area between the sea wall and the caravan park directly to the east of the scheduled monument suffers from having no real identity with regard use and is largely covered in a crude concrete finish, again detracting from the value of the conservation area.



View of gateway into Conservation Area on eastern boundary

Although the car park fulfils an important functional role within the conservation area it is simply a large flat expanse of tarmac devoid of any landscaping that combined with its location detracts heavily from the visual quality of the coastal edge and the Towers. Project Plan no.8 of the Reculver Masterplan proposes the relocation of the car park adjacent to the new visitor centre, which will help to enhance this coastal edge. The location is also an issue in that it dictates the need for Reculver Lane to extend right into the heart of the conservation area, stopping 20m from the coastal edge, presenting an unwelcome and divisive intrusion into this important landscape.

The landscaping of the 'green area' situated to the east of the visitor centre has resulted in an inappropriate landform and a resultant area that is not as attractive or usable as it should be, resulting in the link between it and the surrounding area being lost. The presence of an assemblage of non-native trees to the south of the visitor centre looks incongruous in its setting and does little to providing the area with any real identity.

A range of modern objects detracts from the visual amenity of the conservation area, in particular, around the ancient monument including:

- Redundant telegraph poles and their wires sited around the edge of the fort
- Concrete bollards on the site of the east gate to the fort
- Large concrete buttresses erected against the exterior of the fort's west and south walls fences comprising concrete posts and wire
- The tarmac pathway extending east to west to the south of the fort

A number of the areas/items mentioned above that currently detract from the character of the Reculver conservation area have already been identified in the Reculver Masterplan alongside ways in which to improve them.

5.Recommendations

5.1 Primary Issues

The exclusion of a large area of the Scheduled Ancient Monument from the Conservation Area undermines and undervalues the importance of the area. The paucity of information available for the public also results in the historical significance of the area being underestimated, with people naturally focusing on the Towers but overlooking the Roman Fort.

The proximity of the Conservation Area boundary to the Roman Wall acts to create an abstract feature that has no obvious linkage to its surroundings.

The unsympathetic use of hard landscaping within the Conservation Area inevitably detracts from its overall aesthetic quality. The car park area combined with the concrete apron of the sea defences, whilst necessary in terms of its functionality, is crude in its design, impacting negatively on an important nodal point within the Conservation Area.

5.2 Boundary Assessment

The Blue Dolphin Caravan Park is an intriguing inclusion of the Conservation Area. It contributes little visually and is of no cultural or historical significance and it's position on the periphery means that the Conservation Area boundary could and should be moved to exclude it.

The burnt remains of the listed building overlooking the sea on the inside edge of the eastern boundary detracts from an important area and it is therefore recommended that either the boundary is moved to exclude this building or if the boundary continues to include it, the building be removed or rebuilt. The potential revision to the conservation area is shown below.



Figure 6. Proposed revision to Reculver conservation area boundary

6. Management and Improvement

Within Conservation Areas, controls are available to ensure that new buildings and alterations to existing buildings are designed to be sympathetic in character with their surroundings. Since 1975, trees have additionally been brought under protection, as trees often form part of the special landscape setting to historic buildings. The main aims of defining Conservation Areas are to preserve or enhance the character and setting of historic buildings and other harmonious groups of buildings, open spaces and trees, by the various controls available and also by initiating schemes of enhancement for each area.

There is a need to ensure that all future developments in the conservation area respect the local distinctiveness of Reculver, hence some guidance has been provided below. The key issue is maintenance and improvement of those aspects that contribute to the character and quality of the area.

- Any new development should have a visual understanding of the historic roots of the conservation area as a place of great historical and cultural heritage and all that that entails.
- Replacement of crude hard landscaping, in particular the pathway running horizontally behind the Towers and the car park (which would also benefit from being relocated), with landscaping more appropriate to the historic and environmental setting.
- Ensuring the scale of extensions and any new buildings are in keeping by not dominating the landscape and therefore detracting from the visual impact of the Reculver Towers.
- Protection of the views to and from the Reculver Towers.
- It is important that any change or enlargement does not swamp existing buildings and does not make presently unsympathetic buildings more visible.
- Boundary treatments should remain open and undeveloped wherever possible.

- The open nature of the conservation area is of primary importance in terms of its character and also in providing contrast against the Towers, accentuating its prominence. It is essential therefore that this be retained.
- Any development should act to enhance the Conservation Area for biodiversity, in particular through enhancement of the grassland and landscape plantings including appropriate plant species to support the indigenous fauna of the area.

When considering new development this need not necessarily mean exact copying of earlier styles in new work though on occasion this may be the only way. But it does require developer and designer to come to an understanding of, and a respect for, the character of the area when drawing up their proposals. Every new proposal within the conservation area should be backed up by a thorough analysis of the site and its historic context. This exercise should 'inform' the design process and be part of a design statement submitted with a planning application.

7. Statement of Consultation

A copy of the draft Conservation Area Appraisal was sent to all residents, interest groups, local councillors and service providers. The formal period for consultation was 12 February 2010 to 15 March 2010.

The Council's Herne Bay Area Members Panel were consulted on the draft Conservation Area Appraisal at the meeting of 9 March 2010. The Conservation Area Appraisal was amended in light of the consultation and was presented to the Development Control Committee along with a summary of the responses received, on 27 April 2010. The Development Control Committee formally adopted the document as a 'material consideration'.

All persons who responded to the consultation were contacted and informed of their right to attend and speak at the committee meetings.

Appendices

1. Buildings and Structures that contribute to the Special Character of Conservation Area

Reculver Towers and Roman fort Scheduled Ancient Monument.

2. Locally Listed Buildings details:

King Ethelbert Public House, Reculver Lane, Reculver

A two-storey building beneath a peg tile roof with hipped gables and eaves cornice. The keystone of the main doorway is dated 1843 but probably has an earlier cove. Originally an L-shaped building, now with an extension to the northeast elevation. The front elevation faces south, with the western elevation facing immediately onto Reculver Lane. The front elevation is preceded by a raised-deck seating area that runs the full width of the building. The building is faced with colour-washed roughcast.

A small roadside parking area lies immediately north of the building with a larger car park in front of the main, south facing elevation. A tarmac track leads from this car park in an easterly direction before turning sharply north, following the perimeter of the ancient monument to its junction with a coastal path.

Reculver House, Reculver Lane, Reculver

An 18th century building of two storeys in painted brick beneath a hipped peg tile roof. The main entrance, with porch and pilasters, is accessed via a small raised brick terrace to the southeast elevation. The building has a two-storey, mid 19th century, side extension to the northeast elevation, also of painted brick. This extension has a slate roof. To the northwest corner of the main building, a large building housing an indoor swimming pool has been constructed. The building is used as the clubhouse to the Blue Dolphin caravan park, which occupies land to the east and south west of this section of Reculver Lane.