



Conservation Area Assessment

Rolvenden Layne

Conservation Areas are defined as “areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.”

Designation introduces a general control over the demolition of unlisted buildings and provides the basis for policies designed to preserve all aspects of character or appearance that define an area’s special interest.

There are 43 Conservation Areas in Ashford Borough.

ROLVENDEN LAYNE CONSERVATION AREA ASSESSMENT

AREA APPRAISAL [Brief, objective description of Conservation Area - scale, location, other special characteristics]

Rolvenden Layne is more a large residential hamlet than a village in its own right. It has few village amenities i.e village stores and is without a village Church which tends to be the normal dominating feature in any rural settlement. Geographically, it is only approximately 1½ miles from Rolvenden.

The central part of Rolvenden Layne is a triangle of roads made up of Maytham Road, Winsor Road and Frensham Road. Residential development has in the main taken place within and around this triangle with development on the outskirts of the village exhibiting a lower density and more semi-rural character.

The majority of listed buildings within the settlement can be found on Maytham and Winsor Road. The south-eastern corner of Rolvenden Parish is characterised by large rural estates/manor houses and it would appear that in times past, many of the occupants of Rolvenden Layne would have worked either on the land or on such estates. One manor, Frensham Manor, is located close to the built heart of the settlement and as such is included within the Conservation Area.

In overall terms, Rolvenden Layne exhibits the full range of vernacular styles and detailing as well as characterful turn of the century development by Luytens. Even within the built heart of the village, the abundance of greenery and hedge boundaries to the roads adds greatly to the "rural feel" of the settlement. Outside the village, the landscape is defined as a Special Landscape Area in the Development Plan and falls within the nationally designated High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Listed buildings as well as footpaths which run close to and within the designated Conservation Area are shown on the plan attached as "Plan 1".

ASPECT UNDER CONSIDERATION	COMMENT
topography/physical structure and its relationship to the sites topography	<p>Rolvenden Layne lies at the foot of a long drop from Rolvenden to the north-west passing the gatehouses to Great Maytham and Kingsgate estates. The main "triangle" formed by Maytham Road, Winsor Road and Frensham Road is relatively level albeit there is a gentle dip of Maytham Road to the south-east. Similarly, Frogs Lane falls very slightly to the south-west and then levels off when the first bend in the road has been reached.</p> <p>The land most obviously falls to the south-west in the Thornden Lane area with the former Rolvenden Nursery site being at a slightly lower level than Maytham Road.</p> <p>From the junction of Winsor Road with Frensham Road, the lane running in a northerly direction falls gradually at first and then steeply from No. 35 towards Mount Cottage. From Mount Cottage, the road rises again heading towards the junction with the A28 Rolvenden Road. Frensham Manor is located on relatively level ground.</p>
archaeological significance and potential of the area	<p>None, though the Church at Rolvenden is of early 14th Century and as Rolvenden Layne is not too far removed the area might have archaeological remains in theory.</p>

AREA APPRAISAL	COMMENT
<p>the character and hierarchy of spaces, and townscape quality.</p>	<p>Rolvenden Layne was split into six main groups for appraisal purposes which are shown on the plan attached as "Plan 2". These groups will be referred to below.</p> <p>In terms of spaces, the vast majority are "private" with the degree of privacy and seclusion dependent on the physical relationship to the nearest road. Only one semi-formal open space serving the community is located within the Conservation Area, being the playing field bounded by Maytham Road and Thornden Lane located within Group F.</p> <p>In terms of the built environment, the village scape qualities of the various sub-groups are set out below:-</p> <p><u>Group A</u> - the crossroads of Frogs Lane and Maytham Road is the defining feature of Group A though it is relatively "low key" and has the benefit of greenery on all sides. The ex-local authority "Oakfield" development is set back some distance from the road and due to surrounding Oak trees is not visually prominent. The road dips from the junction into Frogs Lane and what lies beyond the first bend in the lane is invisible - with substantial vegetation and mature trees, the immediate perception is that the open countryside will be reached a short distance along Frogs Lane. The area of paddock/agricultural land adjacent to the crossroads on the northern side of Frensham Road plays a significant part in establishing the character of the entrance into the Conservation Area. The lack of built development suggests a strongly rural environment and it is important that this perception is retained by preventing development on this junction corner.</p> <p>Once travelling along Frogs Lane, the defining village scape feature is the group of Luytens dwellings forming a "mirror image" either side of the road. Even with this physical separation, the design consistency, materials and pattern of development still establishes a definite "group" and the settings of these characterful listed buildings needs to be respected. Photographs of this group are attached as "Plan 3".</p> <p><u>Group B</u> - Maytham Road represents the main street running through the hamlet and is characterised by a large number of listed buildings either side of the highway. Much character is given by abundant vegetation within domestic curtilages which overhangs the pedestrian footway as well as tall well established hedges to property boundaries. Hedges are more prevalent than wooden fencing etc.</p> <p>The buildings are relatively equally set back from the road up until the Hooden Horse Public House. From here moving in a south east direction, the listed buildings on the northern side of Maytham Road are set closer to the highway and due to the curve in the road are more visible.</p>

AREA APPRAISAL	COMMENT
(Continued)	<p>The boundary treatments to dwellings exhibit less vegetation here and there are a greater number of small picket and close boarded fences than elsewhere on Maytham Road.</p> <p>The 1968 local authority housing development on the corner of Maytham Road and Thornden Lane is set out in a "U" shaped fashion with the central dwellings being set back some distance from the highway. Although these are inoffensive in design terms they at least provide some visual sense of enclosure to the southern end of Maytham Road and provide continuity of development on to the Thornden Lane frontage. Approximately 75% have been sold under "Right to Buy" provisions. Nevertheless, Spelling's "Rolvenden Reflections" identifies that the terrace of Victorian cottages ("eight dwellings") which were demolished to make way for this development were of no insignificant character, providing much greater character to this part of the road. Photographs of Group B are attached as "Plan 4".</p> <p><u>Group C</u> - Frensham Road is similar to Maytham Road in terms of the existence of abundant vegetation and high hedge boundaries to the vast majority of properties. This greenery disguises some of the 20th Century infill development which has occurred, especially the row of bungalows erected on the southern side of the road opposite Dial Cottage and running towards the junction with Winsor Road. There is little uniformity in terms of "building line" and this road has a slightly more random character than Maytham Road. Dwellings such as Little Mead and Chaffenden as well as The Red House are set back a large distance from the road and have very secluded settings. Like the majority of Maytham Road, the footway only runs on one side of the road. Photographs of Group C are attached as "Plan 5".</p> <p><u>Group D</u> - a sense of uniformity is the overall characteristic of Winsor Road. The long terrace of listed cottages is set close to the rear of the footway with the cottages only having small gardens without significant vegetation to the road. The terrace has been spoilt by unauthorised fenestration changes.</p> <p>There are a couple of other detached cottages of architectural merit which are similarly set close to the road, helping to contribute to an "intimate" feel. The mature trees and spacious grounds of Frensham Manor on the opposite side of the road provide the visual foil to the buildings on the eastern side of Winsor Road. Photographs of Group D are attached as "Plan 5".</p>

AREA APPRAISAL	COMMENT
(Continued)	<p><u>Group E</u> - this group is characterised by a spacious, low density and semi-rural feel. The vast majority of dwellings sit in large spacious plots and represent pre-20th Century development. There are a number of converted agricultural buildings as well as the large farm and manor houses situated on the eastern side of the road. More so than other parts of Rolvenden Layne, there are many mature trees along boundaries and in small pockets of woodland. Effectively, this very leafy part of the Conservation Area is a transitional area between the hamlet and the countryside beyond. The low density environment and abundance of vegetation makes for very private and tranquil settings to nearly all of the dwellings.</p> <p>Mount Cottage is a small listed building of great character which is located at the lowest point of the lane just before it rises steeply in a northern direction towards the A28. Adjacent to it, the 20th Century bungalow should be included within the Conservation Area so as to make a logical boundary with the village and the countryside beyond. This would also give greater protection to any redevelopment proposal which could either detract or potentially improve the setting of Mount Cottage. A photograph of Mount Cottage is attached on "Plan 6".</p> <p><u>Group F</u> - built development on Thornden Lane within the Conservation Area is limited to the western side of the road. On the eastern side, the village playing field hugs both Thornden Lane and Maytham Road. The playing field is without significant boundary or other vegetation and therefore when approaching the settlement from the south-east, there are long-range views to the aforementioned dwellings located on Thornden Lane. All of the dwellings have vernacular detailing and the absence of development to the south-east gives each an imposing visual setting. One or two inappropriate fenestration changes have occurred which is unfortunate and detracts from visual qualities of the group.</p> <p>The playing field, as a semi-formal public open space, should be protected via development plan policies.</p> <p>Freezingham Cottages on the opposite side of the playing field are a terrace of unusual listed cottages with a uniform box type rear extension along the rear. Most windows have leaded lights. The cottages have a secluded setting and may have had historical connections with the former importance of Frensham Manor, the grounds of which lie adjacent. Photographs of Group F are attached as "Plan 6".</p>

AREA APPRAISAL	COMMENT
<p>the use of distinctive and traditional building materials</p>	<p>The whole range of vernacular styles can be found within Rolvenden Layne. Elevations to dwelling houses are largely either clad in white painted weatherboarding or alternatively have facing brick ground floors with first floor areas clad in tile hanging. Tile hanging is characteristically red/brick coloured, though some houses have small areas of darker tiling creating a "mottled" effect. There are a small number of entirely brick façades such as the corner building on the junction of Winsor Road and Frensham Road as well as Horse Shoes on Frensham Road. The only obvious incidence of a Wealden Hall House can be found at No. 1 Maytham Road.</p> <p>Roofs tend to be undulating Kent Peg tiles, or in a number of cases, slightly lower pitched slate clad roofs. Windows are almost uniformly white painted simple side opening casements or white painted sash windows. Some dwellings have black painted reveals which emphasise the window openings. Most windows are subdivided by glazing bars to produce small characterful panes of glass.</p> <p>Boundary demarcation is predominantly via hedgerows throughout most of the Conservation Area though 1m high picket fences (either white painted or left natural) or small close boarded fences appear periodically.</p>
<p>the contribution made by green spaces, trees, hedges, or other organic elements to the character of the area</p>	<p>As covered in preceding paragraphs, one of the key characteristics of Rolvenden Layne is the abundance of greenery within the heart of the village. The visual softening that this allows should not be underestimated in terms of village character. Open spaces, trees and hedges are shown marked on the plan attached as "Plan 7" and in summary are as follows:-</p> <p><u>Group A</u> - abundant boundary hedging and overhanging mature trees give Frogs Lane a very quiet and secluded rural character.</p> <p><u>Group B</u> - tall boundary hedges obscure long-range views to many of the dwellings which only reveal themselves when immediately upon them. Abundant greenery is replicated on both sides of the road though from the Hooden Horse Public House moving in a south-easterly direction, buildings begin to exert themselves as the visually dominant components of the street scene. By the junction of Maytham Road with Thornden Lane and Winsor Road, boundary vegetation is a much reduced part of the street scene.</p> <p><u>Group C</u> - similar to the main part of Maytham Road. Abundant boundary vegetation and mature trees give a tranquil feel to the road and help significantly soften the impact of 20th Century infill development.</p>

AREA APPRAISAL	COMMENT
(Continued)	<p><u>Group D</u> - the mature trees within the spacious grounds of Frensham Manor offset the intimacy provided by the proximity of dwellings on the opposite side of the road.</p> <p><u>Group E</u> - a transitional phase with spaces between dwellings beginning to increase and in overall terms a significantly lower density environment. Small pockets of trees and abundant vegetation are the key features rather than the dwellings themselves which are largely secluded from immediate view. The dominance of the vegetation adds to the perception that the heart of the village has been left and that the countryside is close by.</p> <p><u>Group F</u> - small domestic scale hedges to a number of the dwellings on the western side of Thornden Lane with a larger hedge on the opposite side of the road surrounding the field. The playing field itself is open on all sides except the boundary with the aforementioned field to the south. The seating on the corner of the playing field was originally erected to commemorate the 1936 Jubilee. The track leading to Freezingham Cottages is surrounded by mature vegetation and vegetation forming part of the spacious grounds of Frensham Manor.</p>
the prevailing or former uses of buildings in the area, and the influence of this on plan form and building types	<p>Rolvenden Layne is approximately 99% residential, with the majority of dwelling units having been directly created for residential use. An oast house on Frogs Lane and a former coach house at Winsor Farm have been converted from agricultural use to residential use. The sole non-residential uses within the village are the Hooden Horse Public House and the Bric-a-Brac shop on the junction of Maytham Road and Winsor Road.</p> <p>The purpose built rural nature of houses within the Conservation Area has given rise to traditional plan forms without excessive depth. This results in characteristically steeply pitched roofs, though slate clad properties tend to utilise more gentle roof pitches.</p>
historical evolution	<p>Without a village Church, around which a nucleus of a settlement usually develops, unravelling the historical evolution of Rolvenden Layne is somewhat difficult. Nevertheless, there is some evidence of a Roman/Saxon history to the development of the area and also some evidence that the size of the settlement may have grown as a result of the impact of the Plague on the village of Rolvenden to the north.</p>

AREA APPRAISAL	COMMENT
historical evolution (continued)	<p>It would appear that Maytham Road is the oldest part of the village as it does contain the majority of listed buildings. Winsor Road would also appear to be early and the long terrace of cottages most probably represents agricultural/estate workers' residences. The same might be said for the small group of dwellings on Thornden Lane though these are somewhat more grand in terms of size and visual prominence. Frensham Road is the most recent area in terms of domestic infilling and at the turn of the century probably had a lower density similar in many ways to that found in Group E around Winsor Farm etc.</p> <p>Finally, Group A is exclusively 20th Century in origins with a broad mix of inoffensive 20th Century designs and the superb Luytens buildings.</p>
the relationship of the built environment to landscape or open countryside.	<p>The dwellings in Groups A, B, C and F all back on to undeveloped countryside though there are comparatively few points within the heart of the village wherein there are views or vistas out to the countryside and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty beyond. From the crossroads of Maytham Road and Winsor Road, there is however a long range view across the playing field to open countryside beyond. From the junction of Winsor Road and Frensham Road, there are occasional glimpses of fields to the north of Winsor Farm though the abundance of mature vegetation prevents any direct views out from the heart of the village.</p> <p>The main countryside view into the village is when travelling from Rolvenden along Maytham Road as has been mentioned above. The area of agricultural land on the northern side of Frensham Road at the junction with Maytham Road contributes to the overall rural qualities of the entrance into the Conservation Area and should be conserved by a Conservation Area inclusion.</p>
the extent of loss, intrusion, or damage sustained by an area	<p>In a few places, the "village-scape" qualities of vernacular style dwellings have been detrimentally affected by window and door alterations. This is apparent on a few of the elevations of buildings on Thornden Lane fronting on to the playing field and most visibly on the long terrace of listed buildings on Winsor Road which despite listed status have been inappropriately altered. The historic nature of the alterations may however mean that no action can be taken to rectify this matter.</p> <p>There are no other serious visual intrusions within the existing Conservation Area.</p>

AREA APPRAISAL	COMMENT
<p>identification of features that detract from the special character of the area and that may provide sites where change could be encouraged</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>the existence of any neutral areas - those that neither enhance nor detract from the character of the conservation area</p>	<p>None, though the Oakfield residential development on the junction of Frogs Lane and Maytham Road is inoffensive 20th Century Local Authority development "saved" in Conservation Area terms by the abundance of mature vegetation around the crossroads area and the physical setback of the dwellings concerned from the surrounding roads. All the dwellings have been sold under "Right to Buy" provisions.</p>
<p>the existence of any threats to the area</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Further window and door alterations to those dwellings within the Conservation Area which although unlisted, have vernacular detailing which cumulatively adds to the overall character of the built part of the Conservation Area.

OUTCOMES

<p>Area boundary</p>	<p>Boundary changes are shown on the plan attached as "Plan 8". These are as follows:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Extension of the Conservation Area to include the open undeveloped paddock/agricultural field which presently exists adjacent to Kingsgate Cottage at the junction of Frensham Road and Maytham Road. See site marked "A" on Plan 8. 2. Extension of the Conservation Area on the northern side of Frensham Road to include the dwelling known as The Red House - previously perversely excluded from the Conservation Area most probably as a reaction to the architectural qualities of this 20th Century dwelling. 3. Extension of the Conservation Area northwards along the lane running from the Winsor Road/Frensham Road junction towards the A28 to bring the bungalow known as Kingsgate View within the Conservation Area as the "entrance" into the settlement when travelling south along this road.
<p>Potential Article 4 Directions</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Removal of permitted development rights contained within Schedule 2 Part 31 Class B of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 in respect of the demolition of walls and other means of enclosure. 2. Removal of Schedule 2 Part 1 Class A rights within the same piece of legislation preventing external alterations and improvements to dwellings in order to protect the external qualities of unlisted vernacular buildings within the Conservation Area.
<p>Site Policies (proposals and protection)</p>	<p>Site policies are shown on the plan attached as "Plan 8". These are as follows:-</p>

(Continued)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A policy is required indicating that on the site marked "A" built development will be unlikely to be permitted given the importance of the parcel of land to the Conservation Area in its existing rural/agricultural undeveloped form. The policy should identify that the present use of this parcel of land is a key characteristic of the entrance into the Conservation Area when travelling into the village from Rolvenden. 2. The village playing field, the only semi-formal public open space within the village, marked "B" should be protected as an amenity space from residential development proposals or similar.
Potential improvement schemes	None

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